

A decorative blue floral border with intricate scrollwork and leaf patterns, framing the central text.

GUZ 06 Joshua

*Bible Commentary:
David Guzik TEV - VI*

David Guzik

David Guziks' Commentary On
06 Joshua
Biblical Text – TEV (Good News Bible)

God Commissions Joshua

Jos 1:1 After the death of the LORD's servant Moses, the LORD spoke to Moses' helper, Joshua son of Nun.

Jos 1:2 He said, "My servant Moses is dead. Get ready now, you and all the people of Israel, and cross the Jordan River into the land that I am giving them.

Jos 1:3 As I told Moses, I have given you and all my people the entire land that you will be marching over.

Jos 1:4 Your borders will reach from the desert in the south to the Lebanon Mountains in the north; from the great Euphrates River in the east, through the Hittite country, to the Mediterranean Sea in the west.

Jos 1:5 Joshua, no one will be able to defeat you as long as you live. I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will always be with you; I will never abandon you.

Jos 1:6 Be determined and confident, for you will be the leader of these people as they occupy this land which I promised their ancestors.

Jos 1:7 Just be determined, be confident; and make sure that you obey the whole Law that my servant Moses gave you. Do not neglect any part of it and you will succeed wherever you go.

Jos 1:8 Be sure that the book of the Law is always read in your worship. Study it day and night, and make sure that you obey everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Jos 1:9 Remember that I have commanded you to be determined and confident! Do not be afraid or discouraged,

for I, the LORD your God, am with you wherever you go."

Joshua Assumes Command

Jos 1:10 Then Joshua ordered the leaders to

Jos 1:11 go through the camp and say to the people, "Get some food ready, because in three days you are going to cross the Jordan River to occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you."

Jos 1:12 Joshua said to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and to half the tribe of Manasseh,

Jos 1:13 "Remember how the LORD's servant Moses told you that the LORD your God would give you this land on the east side of the Jordan as your home.

Jos 1:14 Your wives, your children, and your livestock will stay here, but your soldiers, armed for battle, will cross over ahead of the other Israelites in order to help them

Jos 1:15 until they have occupied the land west of the Jordan that the LORD your God has given them. When he has given safety to all the tribes of Israel, then you may come back and settle here in your own land east of the Jordan, which Moses, the LORD's servant, gave to you."

Jos 1:16 They answered Joshua, "We will do everything you have told us and will go anywhere you send us.

Jos 1:17 We will obey you, just as we always obeyed Moses, and may the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses!

Jos 1:18 Whoever questions your authority or disobeys any of your orders will be put to death. Be determined and confident!"

Joshua 1:1-18

Joshua 1 - God's Commission to Joshua

A. Introduction: A survey of the history of Israel from Egypt to Canaan.

1. Israel was delivered from Egypt's degrading bondage.

a. These were historical events, but they were not *only* historical. God speaks through history to give an example of our deliverance from the degrading bondage of sin (as Paul makes clear in 1Co 10:6; 1Co 10:11).

b. The central act of redemption in the New Testament is the work of Jesus on the cross. The central act of redemption in the Old Testament is the deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

2. Israel, led by Moses, wandered in the Sinai wilderness.

a. During that time, Israel experienced supernatural providence such as the supply of manna, water from rocks, the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, and so forth.

b. During that time, they also received Divine revelation - the Mosaic Law. God communicated to them His holy standard.

3. The land of Canaan represents the destination of God's people after they have been set free from degrading bondage.

a. Not our *ultimate* destination, as the famous hymns would have it. Those hymns suggest that Canaan represents *heaven*.

i. As the lines to *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* go:

*I looked over Jordan, and what did I see
Comin' for to carry me home?
A band of angels, coming after me
Comin' for to carry me home.*

b. Biblically, the land over the Jordan - the Promised Land - does not speak of heaven. Hebrews 3-4 shows Canaan as a picture of the rest and victory that can be enjoyed by every believer.

i. In this sense, F. B. Meyer connects the Book of Joshua with the Book of Ephesians. Both describe a spiritual walk of promise, wealth, and victory that are ours with Jesus.

c. This also shows that the deliverance from Egypt was only in preparation for the enjoyment of Canaan. In our Christian life, we are *brought out* of sin so that we might be *brought in* to abundant life. The wilderness is never God's permanent destination for us.

d. Even as an entire generation of Israel died in the wilderness, so many Christians die in the desert dryness of spiritual experience, never walking in the fullness of what God has for them.

4. *The leader: Joshua as a type of Jesus.*

a. Remember that the Greek name *Jesus* simply translates the Hebrew name *Joshua*. Their names are identical. Whatever Israel received in the Promised Land, they received through the hand of Joshua; whatever we receive from God we receive through Jesus Christ, our Joshua.

B. God commissions Joshua's work.

1. *(1) Moses is dead, and God speaks to Joshua.*

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying:

a. **After the death of Moses:** Moses (who exemplified the law of God) could not lead Israel into the land of promise and rest. This all happens **after the death of Moses.**

b. **The LORD spoke to Joshua:** Joshua - who was not a young man at this time - had spent his entire career

previously as the **assistant** of Moses, now finds that it is his own time to lead, but only after God prepared him.

c. **Moses' assistant:** Joshua was prepared by faithful service in small things, in being Moses' assistant. Redpath tells of a motto over a kitchen sink: "Divine service is conducted here three times daily." The motto is true, and great men and women are prepared by faithfulness to the small things.

2. (2-3) ***Am giving and have given.***

"Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them; the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses."

a. **Your foot... I have given you:** Entrance into the land of Canaan was entrusted to a representative. Joshua was the trustee of the land for the people. In the same way, our representative Jesus goes before us and what we have in God we possess in Him.

b. **I have given you:** The whole land was given, but they could only possess that which they claimed (**every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you**). What they took must be fought for against a determined opposition.

i. God certainly could have simply eliminated all their enemies with a mere thought; but He calls Israel into partnership with Himself to see His will done.

ii. Because taking the land took *effort*, the challenge ahead was not for those content with Egypt, but for those who would press ahead for what God had called them to.

3. (4-5) *The promise: victory is assured because Joshua is called by God.*

From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. No man shall *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

a. **From the wilderness... As far as the great river:**

The precise territory of the land is described. This was no “pie in the sky” promise. It described real land with real boundaries.

b. **I will be with you:** Victory is assured not because Joshua is a great leader, or because Israel is a great nation, but because God is a great God, and He says to Joshua, **I will be with you**. This is enough for any man seeking to do God’s will.

4. (6-9) The conditions of the promise of victory.

Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God *is* with you wherever you go.

a. **Be strong and very courageous:** Joshua is called to boldness in God. This exposes Joshua’s weakness; there

was a *need* for such a command, because even a great leader like Joshua needed such encouragement.

i. This bold courage would not be in Joshua himself, but in God. We can be full of self-confidence that will take us to ruin, but we should instead be full of a genuine God-confidence.

b. **That you may observe to do according to all the law:** Joshua must take great care to observe the law. God's word and Joshua's commitment to it would be the pillars supporting his success.

c. **To all the law:** Joshua did not only need to read God's word. It had to be on his *lips* (**shall not depart from your mouth**), in his *mind* (**meditate in it day and night**), and he had to *do* it (**observe to do according to all that is written**).

d. **For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success:** God's Word so lived is a guarantee of Christian success. Not that it promises a life without problems, but it does insure a life able to deal with anything, because it takes full advantage of God's presence and promises.

i. And *Christian* success is not measured by the same standards as the world's success. Even if the world accounts us as *sheep for the slaughter*, we are actually *more than conquerors through Him who loved us* (Rom 8:36-37).

e. **For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go:** The final encouragement, repeated from Jos 1:5, reminds us that Joshua's success did not depend solely on his ability to keep God's Word. It depended even more on God's presence with him.

C. Preparations to cross the Jordan.

1. (10-11) *Command to the officers.*

Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, "Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.'"

a. **For within three days:** The waiting for God is often the most difficult part for us, but days of waiting are always days of preparation in God's work. There is no *wasted* time with God.

2. (12-15) *Reminder to the eastern tribes.*

And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh Joshua spoke, saying, "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land.' Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them, until the LORD has given your brethren rest, as He gave you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD's servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise."

a. **And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh Joshua spoke:** These tribes which decided to settle on the east side of the Jordan river (land that Israel had already conquered) had promised to cross over and help the rest of the nation take the land on the west side of the Jordan river (Num 32:16-32).

b. **But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them:** This

same principle operates in the Body of Christ. When one member has a need, it is the common need of the body (1Co 12:25-26). We should never refuse to help a brother in need because *our* own state is settled.

3. (16-18) *The eastern tribes promise their allegiance to Joshua.*

So they answered Joshua, saying, "All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."

a. **All you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go:** Here we see Israel in the kind of unity as a nation that was essential to fulfill God's calling and promise for them. They overcame the temptation to see the eastern tribes as separate from the rest of Israel.

b. **Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you:** The willingness of the people to receive Joshua as their leader, replacing Moses, was a confirmation of the LORD's words to Joshua previously in the chapter.

c. **Only be strong and of good courage:** The representatives from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh say the same thing to Joshua that he heard from the Lord in Jos 1:6. This must have been a confirmation of God's word to Joshua when they said it. God loves to *confirm* His word to us.

Rahab Hides the Spies

Jos 2:1 Then Joshua sent two spies from the camp at Acacia with orders to go and secretly explore the land of Canaan, especially the city of Jericho. When they came to the city, they went to spend the night in the house of a prostitute named Rahab.

Jos 2:2 The king of Jericho heard that some Israelites had come that night to spy out the country,

Jos 2:3 so he sent word to Rahab: "The men in your house have come to spy out the whole country! Bring them out!"

Jos 2:4 (4-6) "Some men did come to my house," she answered, "but I don't know where they were from. They left at sundown before the city gate was closed. I didn't find out where they were going, but if you start after them quickly, you can catch them." (Now Rahab had taken the two spies up on the roof and hidden them under some stalks of flax that she had put there.)

Jos 2:7 The king's men left the city, and then the gate was shut. They went looking for the Israelite spies as far as the place where the road crosses the Jordan.

Jos 2:8 Before the spies settled down for the night, Rahab went up on the roof

Jos 2:9 and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given you this land. Everyone in the country is terrified of you.

Jos 2:10 We have heard how the LORD dried up the Red Sea in front of you when you were leaving Egypt. We have also heard how you killed Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan.

Jos 2:11 We were afraid as soon as we heard about it; we have all lost our courage because of you. The LORD your God is God in heaven above and here on earth.

Jos 2:12 Now swear by him that you will treat my family as kindly as I have treated you, and give me some sign that I can trust you.

Jos 2:13 Promise me that you will save my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families! Don't let us be killed!"

Jos 2:14 The men said to her, "May God take our lives if we don't do as we say! If you do not tell anyone what we have been doing, we promise you that when the LORD gives us this land, we will treat you well."

Jos 2:15 Rahab lived in a house built into the city wall, so she let the men down from the window by a rope.

Jos 2:16 "Go into the hill country," she said, "or the king's men will find you. Hide there for three days until they come back. After that, you can go on your way."

Jos 2:17 The men said to her, "We will keep the promise that you have made us give.

Jos 2:18 This is what you must do. When we invade your land, tie this red cord to the window you let us down from. Get your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's family together in your house.

Jos 2:19 If anyone goes out of the house, his death will be his own fault, and we will not be responsible; but if anyone in the house with you is harmed, then we will be responsible.

Jos 2:20 However, if you tell anyone what we have been doing, then we will not have to keep our promise which you have made us give you."

Jos 2:21 She agreed and sent them away. When they had gone, she tied the red cord to the window.

Jos 2:22 The spies went into the hills and hid. The king's men looked for them all over the countryside for three days, but they did not find them, so they returned to Jericho.

Jos 2:23 Then the two spies came down from the hills, crossed the river, and went back to Joshua. They told him everything that had happened,

Jos 2:24 and then said, "We are sure that the LORD has given us the whole country. All the people there are terrified of us."

Joshua 2:1-24

Joshua 2 - The Salvation of Rahab

A. Spies sent to the city of Jericho.

1. (1a) *Joshua sends forth spies.*

Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho."

a. **Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly:** This kind of careful preparation shows faithfulness, not a lack of faith. God's promises of success to us should never lull us into inaction. They should spur us on to a step out in godly activity.

i. We aren't told who the two spies are, but Jewish tradition - speculation, really - says they were faithful Caleb and the High Priest Eliezer.

ii. Remember that all this takes place during the three days Joshua has commanded the nation to wait on the banks of the Jordan (Jos 1:11). God has a special purpose for these three days.

b. **To spy secretly:** Joshua also shows wisdom by sending them **secretly**. The last spies that went out publicly turned out badly for Israel, when a majority of the spies came back with a discouraging report (Numbers 13).

c. **Go, view the land, especially Jericho:** God has greater things in mind for this spy mission; it will fail as a

mission of military reconnaissance, but it will succeed in God's purpose.

2. (1b) The spies at Rahab's house.

So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there.

a. Came to the house of a harlot named Rahab:

Through the history of Christianity, it has embarrassed some Bible interpreters that these two spies went to the house of a prostitute. Some have tried to say that Rahab was simply an "innkeeper," but the language is clear enough. She was a **harlot**.

i. In the second century Origen wrote: "As the first Joshua sent his spies before him and they were received into the harlot's house, so the second Joshua sent his forerunners, whom the publicans and harlots gladly received".

ii. It is great when sinners receive Jesus; not those who deny their sinfulness or don't know what they are capable of apart from Jesus - the gospel is for those who know they are sinners.

b. And lodged there: Why did they go to the harlot's house? Though it was an awkward place, it must be admitted that it was a perfect place to hide out and remain anonymous, and this was necessary because the city was on strict guard.

i. There isn't even the hint of immorality with Rahab. Anyone who assumes that there was immoral conduct forces their own bias on the text.

3. (2-7) Rahab hides and protects the spies.

And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country." So the king of

Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country." Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they *were* from. And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them." (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.) Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords. And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate.

a. Then the woman took the two men and hid them: In the culture of that day, there was a strong tradition of hospitality. If someone was a guest in your house, you had a strong duty to protect them and care for them. Even considering this, Rahab went much further than the respect of cultural traditions regarding hospitality. She put her own life on the line for these men.

b. Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from: The Bible simply *reports* Rahab's lie; it does not praise it or excuse it. Perhaps if she had beforehand determined in her heart to not lie in obedience to God, He would have made a way for her to preserve the life of the spies *without* lying.

c. The men went out: Rahab's lie is not justified, but it does show courage. Consider that she was a pagan sinner in a city and culture wholly given over to the worship of false gods and immorality, with no previous contact with the word of God or the things of God. What is your excuse?

B. Salvation for Rahab.

1. (8-14) Rahab's confession of faith.

Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, and said to the men: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who *were* on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard *these things*, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He *is* God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death." So the men answered her, "Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the LORD has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you."

a. I know that the LORD has given you the land:

This surprising outburst of faith shows how God had a plan in bringing Rahab and the spies together. It is the same kind of thing we see when God supernaturally brings us to people who are believers or open to the gospel.

b. He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath:

Rahab's declaration was proof of her faith. It was not

strong faith and it was not perfect faith, but her faith was commendable nonetheless (Heb 11:31 and Jas 2:25).

i. We may be appalled at the fact that Rahab was a prostitute, or that she was a liar. But the fact is that she was not saved by her works, but by her faith. She knew who God was, she knew who she was, and she trusted God for her very life.

c. **That you also will show kindness to my father's house:** Rahab's desire to see her family saved, and the length she goes to in order to save their lives shows that her love should be noticed, as well as her faith.

d. **Swear to me by the LORD:** This shows that Rahab longed for assurance by asked for an oath. She *wanted* to leave her sinful life and culture and come with God's people.

2. (15-21) *The means of Rahab's salvation: the scarlet cord.*

Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall. And she said to them, "Get to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you. Hide there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way." So the men said to her: "We *will be* blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear, unless, *when* we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household to your own home. So it shall be *that* whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood *shall be* on his own head, and we *will be* guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood *shall be* on our head if a hand is laid on him. And if you tell this business of ours, then we will be free from your oath which you

made us swear.” Then she said, “According to your words, so *be* it.” And she sent them away, and they departed. And she bound the scarlet cord in the window.

a. **Bind this scarlet cord in the window:** This was the signal to the army of Israel that the people in this home were to be spared. Despite Rahab’s desire, despite her faith, despite the promises of these spies, she would have perished unless she put her trust in a blood red cord cast down from her window. Without the scarlet cord, she could not have been saved.

i. As early as the first century, commentators such as Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, Ireneaus, Origen and more saw **this scarlet cord** as a symbol of the blood of Jesus.

b. **And she bound the scarlet cord in the window:** Rahab *immediately* put her faith into both the identification and safety of the scarlet cord. She also trusted in the ones who made the promise about the scarlet cord (**according to your words, so be it**).

i. Joshua would be a savior for Rahab, but a judge of the rest of Jericho. In the same way Jesus is a savior for those who trust Him, but a judge for those who reject Him.

c. **According to your words, so be it:** Rahab’s destiny was to marry one of the princes of Judah and be found in the lineage of King David and Jesus Himself.

3. (22-24) *Mission accomplished.*

They departed and went to the mountain, and stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers sought *them* all along the way, but did not find *them*. So the two men returned, descended from the mountain, and crossed over; and they came to

Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all that had befallen them. And they said to Joshua, "Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us."

a. And told him all that had befallen them:

Considering how God will have them conquer the city of Jericho, how did the information from these spies help in the battle for Jericho? Jericho was one of the strongest and most heavily fortified cities of Canaan; if Israel could conquer it, the whole land would be before them - but how did this reconnaissance help them with the eventual battle? It didn't help them at all!

b. Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us:

The reconnaissance mission didn't help with military strategy, but it did help in encouraging the faith of these spies and the whole nation. This was far more important than a good battle plan.

i. There was another purpose at work in sending the spies: to save Rahab. In this, we see the extent God goes to in bringing one woman and her father's house to salvation - Someone seemingly "impossible" to save.

ii. You may know some that seem "impossible" to save, but God's hand is not short to save people like Rahab, and He can work in amazing ways to bring salvation.

Israel Crosses the Jordan

Jos 3:1 The next morning Joshua and all the people of Israel got up early, left the camp at Acacia, and went to the Jordan, where they camped while waiting to cross it.

Jos 3:2 Three days later the leaders went through the camp

Jos 3:3 and told the people, "When you see the priests carrying the Covenant Box of the LORD your God, break camp and follow them.

Jos 3:4 You have never been here before, so they will show you the way to go. But do not get near the Covenant Box; stay about half a mile behind it."

Jos 3:5 Joshua told the people, "Purify yourselves, because tomorrow the LORD will perform miracles among you."

Jos 3:6 Then he told the priests to take the Covenant Box and go with it ahead of the people. They did as he said.

Jos 3:7 The LORD said to Joshua, "What I do today will make all the people of Israel begin to honor you as a great man, and they will realize that I am with you as I was with Moses.

Jos 3:8 Tell the priests carrying the Covenant Box that when they reach the river, they must wade in and stand near the bank."

Jos 3:9 Then Joshua said to the people, "Come here and listen to what the LORD your God has to say.

Jos 3:10 As you advance, he will surely drive out the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. You will know that the living God is among you

Jos 3:11 when the Covenant Box of the Lord of all the earth crosses the Jordan ahead of you.

Jos 3:12 Now choose twelve men, one from each of the tribes of Israel.

Jos 3:13 When the priests who carry the Covenant Box of the LORD of all the earth put their feet in the water, the Jordan will stop flowing, and the water coming downstream will pile up in one place."

Jos 3:14 (14-15) It was harvest time, and the river was in flood. When the people left the camp to cross the Jordan, the priests went ahead of them, carrying the Covenant Box. As soon as the priests stepped into the river,

Jos 3:16 the water stopped flowing and piled up, far upstream at Adam, the city beside Zarethan. The flow downstream to the Dead Sea was completely cut off, and the people were able to cross over near Jericho.

Jos 3:17 While the people walked across on dry ground, the priests carrying the LORD's Covenant Box stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan until all the people had crossed over.

Joshua 3:1-17

Joshua 3 - Crossing the Jordan

A. Instructions for crossing the Jordan River.

1. (1-2) Camping by the Jordan: Israel faces up to their own utter helplessness to accomplish what was set before them.

Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia Grove and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they crossed over. So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp;

a. **Came to the Jordan... and lodged there before they crossed over:** God told the people of Israel to wait three days at shores of the Jordan River (Jos 1:11). All that time, the people of Israel saw a rushing river, swollen with spring rains laying in front of them. They must have asked, "How can we ever cross this river?"

i. It was one thing for a few spies to make their way across (as happened in Joshua 2), but here we are talking about a nation of *millions*, with all their possessions - how will they make it?

b. **After three days, that the officers went through the camp:** At a moment like this, all the wonderful talk about living in the Promised Land can sound pretty hollow. There is a seemingly impossible obstacle blocking the way - how will God do this one?

2. (3-5) *The ark of God will lead the way.*

And they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed *this* way before." And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you."

a. **When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it:** Joshua didn't send his Army Corps of Engineers first. Instead, he sent the priests who carried the ark of the covenant, which was the visible representation of God's presence with the people. Joshua knew this was a *spiritual* problem, not a feat of human engineering.

b. **Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure:** God required that they keep some 1,000 yards behind the ark. This was for two reasons. First, to respect the holy nature of the ark of the covenant. But also, it was to make sure that everyone had a clear view of the ark. **That you may know the way by which you must go** shows that the ark of the covenant led the way. Israel would accomplish this impossible task as they set their

eyes upon God's presence and followed only after His presence.

c. **Sanctify yourselves:** Because this would be a spiritual battle, Joshua requires that the people have a spiritual preparation. **Sanctify yourselves** means they were to separate themselves from common things to focus in on the LORD, and to see that **the LORD will do wonders among you.**

3. (6) *Joshua's step of faith: he sends the priests to walk across a swollen river Jordan.*

Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people.

a. **Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people:** We should assume that God *told* Joshua to do this, and that he wasn't working out of foolish presumption. We can also assume that God spoke to Joshua about this as Joshua was in God's word, reading and remembering the crossing of the Red Sea.

i. We see Joshua's success depending on and growing out of the promise of Jos 1:8 : *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.* Joshua obviously had the word of God on his lips, on his mind, and in his actions.

b. **So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people:** Even with God's specific guidance, and with specific guidance from His word, this is still an impressive step of faith for Joshua. Living and walking in the Promised Land comes from this kind of

faith, not a slavish reliance on a “law” relationship with God.

- i. Faith leads us into greater victories than law ever could.

4. (7-8) God’s encouragement to Joshua.

And the LORD said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, saying, ‘When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall stand in the Jordan.’”

a. **This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel:** As Joshua takes a step of faith, God encourages him all the way. God always wants to encourage and help along our faith, but we may have our ears closed to His encouragement.

b. **That they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with you:** God will make Joshua a leader like Moses in the eyes of the people, and He will do it by using Joshua to miraculously lead the people across an impossible body of water.

c. **When you have come to the edge of the water... you shall stand in the Jordan:** After Joshua had obeyed the previous guidance, based on faith and his understanding of God’s word, now God gave him more specific instructions.

5. (9-13) Joshua encourages and instructs Israel.

So Joshua said to the children of Israel, “Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God.” And Joshua said, “By this you shall know that the living God *is* among you, and *that* He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites

and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Gergashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites: Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan. Now therefore, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from every tribe. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, *that* the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap.”

a. By this you shall know that the living God is among you: Joshua understands the way God connects events in our lives. The fact that He will move on behalf of Israel here is taken as a promise of His future blessing and movement for them.

b. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan: Joshua knows that the ark will lead the way - again, this is a spiritual battle to be won.

c. The waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap: Joshua’s general outlook, as communicated to the people, is refreshing. The impossible problems in their way are not seen as an oppressive trial, but as a glorious opportunity to see God work.

B. Crossing the Jordan River.

1. (14-15) The faith of the priests and of Joshua.

So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of

the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest),

a. The feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water: The priests begin the procession, with the ark of the covenant some 1,000 yards in front of the people, and the priests came and walked right into a river that looked like it wasn't going anywhere.

i. Who knows how long the priests stood there in the river? It might have been a moment; but it may have been a long time - but in a situation like that, a moment *seems* like a long time!

b. Dipped in the edge of the water: We usually want the river to be dry before we even make a step; but God was truly calling Israel to step out in faith.

c. For the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest: Joshua reminds us that this was not a time when the Jordan was reduced to a trickle. Because of the spring rains, at this time of early harvest, the river was swollen and overflowing its banks.

2. (16-17) The Jordan is stopped, and the people cross over on dry ground.

That the waters which came down from upstream stood *still*, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that *is* beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho. Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan.

a. **The waters which came down from upstream stood still:** In some miraculous manner, God stopped the flow of the Jordan River. He may have used a natural occurrence (an earthquake has often been suggested), but the *timing* of it was at the hand of God.

b. **On dry ground in the midst of the Jordan:** As well, even with the flow of the river stopped, it was miraculous that the people could cross over on **dry ground in the midst of the Jordan**. God miraculously dried the riverbed so that they didn't slog through marshy mud.

i. This miracle obviously connects with the miracle the nation knew some 40 years earlier: the passing through the Red Sea. God brought them *out* of Egypt's bondage with a miracle, and He brought them *in* to the Promised Land with a miracle.

c. **The priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan:** How did it happen? What was the key to this amazing miracle? Notice the centrality of the **ark of the covenant of the LORD**. The ark is referred to 14 times in these 17 verses. This was all about the trust of Joshua, the priests, and Israel had in the God they knew was present with them.

i. The ark of the covenant cleared the way for Israel. This was spiritual work, not work for Israel's "Army Corps of Engineers."

3. *To face such impossible challenges in our lives, we must look unto Jesus, our Joshua. He always leads us.*

a. Jesus is the fulfillment of the ark; He is *Immanuel*, which is translated, "God with us" (Mat 1:23).

b. Jesus has cleared the way to victory over all things: *Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a*

public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in the cross (Col 2:15).

c. As we keep our eyes on, and follow behind our victorious Jesus, the river of impossibility will dry up.

d. To the cynic, who wonders if they haven't tried that and been disappointed, we must ask them: "Have you really tried this? Have you truly walked according to God's word, trusted in Jesus and been disappointed?" Perhaps your disappointment is actually in your flesh.

Twelve Memorial Stones from the Jordan

Jos 4:1 When the whole nation had crossed the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua,

Jos 4:2 "Choose twelve men, one from each tribe,

Jos 4:3 and command them to take twelve stones out of the middle of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests were standing. Tell them to carry these stones with them and to put them down where you camp tonight."

Jos 4:4 Then Joshua called the twelve men he had chosen,

Jos 4:5 and he told them, "Go into the Jordan ahead of the Covenant Box of the LORD your God. Each one of you take a stone on your shoulder, one for each of the tribes of Israel.

Jos 4:6 These stones will remind the people of what the LORD has done. In the future, when your children ask what these stones mean to you,

Jos 4:7 you will tell them that the water of the Jordan stopped flowing when the LORD's Covenant Box crossed the river. These stones will always remind the people of Israel of what happened here."

Jos 4:8 The men followed Joshua's orders. As the LORD had commanded Joshua, they took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, one for each of the tribes of Israel,

carried them to the camping place, and put them down there.

Jos 4:9 Joshua also set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, where the priests carrying the Covenant Box had stood. (Those stones are still there.)

Jos 4:10 The priests stood in the middle of the Jordan until everything had been done that the LORD ordered Joshua to tell the people to do. This is what Moses had commanded. The people hurried across the river.

Jos 4:11 When they were all on the other side, the priests with the LORD's Covenant Box went on ahead of the people.

Jos 4:12 The men of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and of half the tribe of Manasseh, ready for battle, crossed ahead of the rest of the people, as Moses had told them to do.

Jos 4:13 In the presence of the LORD about forty thousand men ready for war crossed over to the plain near Jericho.

Jos 4:14 What the LORD did that day made the people of Israel consider Joshua a great man. They honored him all his life, just as they had honored Moses.

Jos 4:15 Then the LORD told Joshua

Jos 4:16 to command the priests carrying the Covenant Box to come up out of the Jordan.

Jos 4:17 Joshua did so,

Jos 4:18 and when the priests reached the riverbank, the river began flowing once more and flooded its banks again.

Jos 4:19 The people crossed the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month and camped at Gilgal, east of Jericho.

Jos 4:20 There Joshua set up the twelve stones taken from the Jordan.

Jos 4:21 And he said to the people of Israel, "In the future, when your children ask you what these stones mean,

Jos 4:22 you will tell them about the time when Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.

Jos 4:23 Tell them that the LORD your God dried up the water of the Jordan for you until you had crossed, just as he dried up the Red Sea for us.

Jos 4:24 Because of this everyone on earth will know how great the LORD's power is, and you will honor the LORD your God forever."

Joshua 4:1-24

Joshua 4 - Memorial Stones

A. Crossing the Jordan River is finished, and the ark of the covenant comes from the midst of the river.

1. (1-9) After the nation crosses over, God commands Joshua to set up a memorial of the crossing.

And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying: "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, and command them, saying, 'Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight.'" Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; and Joshua said to them: "Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones *mean* to you?' Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the

ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.” And the children of Israel did so, just as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the LORD had spoken to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there to this day.

a. **When all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan:** Israel was now on the other side of the Jordan - in the Promised Land. But what is life in the Promised Land like? Is it one glorious vacation time after another? No; for Israel it was a place of battle, but most of all, it was a place of *trust* - they knew they had to trust God with everything they had, because the challenges only got *bigger* in the Promised Land - but so did the blessings.

i. Most of us would have wanted to rush on through and take care of Jericho - why not take advantage of the time when they are all afraid of you? But God is never in a hurry; and He knows that beyond us *doing* something, we must *be* something for Him - so He takes time out to conquer Israel spiritually before they can conquer Jericho under His guidance.

b. **Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests’ feet stood firm** Each tribe was to send a representative to take a stone - undoubtedly a large one

- from the dry river bed where Israel had crossed over, so the stones could be set up as a memorial.

c. That this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come: The purpose of this memorial was so that the people of Israel could teach their children about the great things God had done, so that the work of God would not be forgotten among the generations.

i. We often fail in our trust of God because we forget the great things He has done, and often the faith of our children is weak because they have never been told how great God is and how real His working is in our lives.

d. Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan: Joshua also set up a pile of memorial stones in the very bed of the river Jordan, so that when it was lowered in a season of drought, those stones could be seen and would testify of the time that God had completely dried up the Jordan.

i. Especially in a time of drought, we need to remember the great things God has done.

2. (10-18) The nation passes over, the priests come through, and the Jordan returns to its normal flow.

So the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua; and the people hurried and crossed over. Then it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over, that the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed over in the presence of the people. And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of

Israel, as Moses had spoken to them. About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho. On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life. Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, "Command the priests who bear the ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan." Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, "Come up from the Jordan." And it came to pass, when the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come from the midst of the Jordan, *and* the soles of the priests' feet touched the dry land, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before.

a. So the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished:

The priests stood with the ark of the covenant for the entire time it took the nation to cross over. The visible token of the presence of God had to remain in the river through the entire crossing.

b. And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel: The people content to settle on the east side of the Jordan stayed on their side of the Jordan but sent their armies over to fight on behalf of the rest of the nation, just as they had promised (Jos 1:12-16).

c. On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel: God fulfilled His promise to Joshua (Jos 3:7), raising him up as a great leader for Israel, even as He had done for Moses.

d. The waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before: The manner

and timing with which the Jordan returned to its natural flow shows that this event was supernaturally arranged by God.

B. The first work at Gilgal: memorial stones set up.

1. (19-20) The stones are set up as a memorial in Gilgal.

Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal.

a. **They camped in Gilgal:** **Gilgal** will become their base of operations for the conquest of the entire Promised Land. Therefore, it was appropriate that the first work at Gilgal was to set up a memorial to God's great works.

2. (21-24) The purpose of the memorial stones.

Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What *are* these stones?' then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land'; "for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it *is* mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever."

a. **What are these stones:** There was obviously a purpose in the memorial stones for the people of Israel themselves. It is so easy for us to forget the great miracles God has performed on our behalf.

i. We don't remember the past great works of God so that we can live in a dreamland of the past, thinking

that the best days of our Christian experience are behind us. We remember them as a point of faith, so we can trust God for greater and greater works in the future, because we have seen and experienced His past faithfulness.

b. **Then you shall let your children know:** There was an important purpose for their **children**, so they would have a point of contact with God's work in the past, and remember that God's work did not begin with them and their time.

c. **That all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD:** There was also a purpose for the world, so they would know that there is a God in heaven who can work miracles, a God they should seek with all their heart.

The New Generation Circumcised

Jos 5:1 All the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the Mediterranean Sea heard that the LORD had dried up the Jordan until the people of Israel had crossed it. They became afraid and lost their courage because of the Israelites.

Jos 5:2 Then the LORD told Joshua, "Make some knives out of flint and circumcise the Israelites."

Jos 5:3 So Joshua did as the LORD had commanded, and he circumcised the Israelites at a place called Circumcision Hill.

Jos 5:4 (4-6) When the people of Israel left Egypt, all the males were already circumcised. However, during the forty years the people spent crossing the desert, none of the baby boys had been circumcised. Also, by the end of that time all the men who were of fighting age when they left Egypt had died because they had disobeyed the LORD. Just as he had sworn, they were not allowed to see the rich and fertile land that he had promised their ancestors.

Jos 5:7 The sons of these men had never been circumcised, and it was this new generation that Joshua circumcised.

Jos 5:8 After the circumcision was completed, the whole nation stayed in the camp until the wounds had healed.

Jos 5:9 The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have removed from you the disgrace of being slaves in Egypt." That is why the place was named Gilgal, the name it still has.

First Passover in Canaan

Jos 5:10 While the Israelites were camping at Gilgal on the plain near Jericho, they observed Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month.

Jos 5:11 The next day was the first time they ate food grown in Canaan: roasted grain and bread made without yeast.

Jos 5:12 The manna stopped falling then, and the Israelites no longer had any. From that time on they ate food grown in Canaan.

The Commander of the Lord's Army

Jos 5:13 While Joshua was near Jericho, he suddenly saw a man standing in front of him, holding a sword. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you one of our soldiers, or an enemy?"

Jos 5:14 "Neither," the man answered. "I am here as the commander of the LORD's army." Joshua threw himself on the ground in worship and said, "I am your servant, sir. What do you want me to do?"

Jos 5:15 And the commander of the LORD's army told him, "Take your sandals off; you are standing on holy ground." And Joshua did as he was told.

Joshua 5:1-15

Joshua 5 - Circumcision and Passover at Gilgal

A. The second work at Gilgal: A radical obedience.

1. (1) The fear of Israel's enemies at the faith and obedience of Israel.

So it was, when all the kings of the Amorites who were on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel until we had crossed over, that their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel.

a. Their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel: Melting hearts are a great thing if they melt unto repentance. But sometimes hearts melt before God, and then solidify again into an even harder state.

b. Heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel: When our spiritual enemies see that we are trusting in God and are willing to step out in obedient faith - even when it seems crazy - they instantly lose confidence in their battle against us.

i. We may forget, but our spiritual enemies always remember that *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Rom 8:31) They know that when we are really trusting in God, their defeat is assured.

2. (2-8) The circumcision of Israel at Gilgal.

At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time." So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. And this *is* the reason why Joshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Egypt *who were* males, all the men of war, had

died in the wilderness on the way, after they had come out of Egypt. For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness, on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised. For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people *who were* men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD; to whom the LORD swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, "a land flowing with milk and honey." Then Joshua circumcised their sons *whom* He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way. So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed.

a. **Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time:** Apparently, all during the forty years of waiting in the wilderness, none of the sons born during that time had been circumcised. Now God commanded that this be done.

i. Joshua makes clear the reason why there was a new generation born in the wilderness: because the old generation **did not obey the voice of the LORD** and take the promise of **a land flowing with milk and honey** by faith.

ii. This new generation was **raised up in... place** of the generation of unbelief. God's work *would* go on, but the people of God who had unbelief would not share in it.

b. **Then Joshua circumcised their sons:** Circumcision was always a powerful act of consecration to God. In it, an Israelite said "I'm not like the other nations. I listen to

God and do what He says I should do.” It was stepping out in faithful obedience and identifying yourself as one of the LORD’s people. It was renouncing the flesh and the world. It was dying to self and living to God.

c. They stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed: Obviously, this was suicidal from a military standpoint. All the men of fighting age were made completely vulnerable and unable to fight for a period of several days, **till they were healed.**

i. Gen 34:24-25 describes how Simeon and Levi killed all the men in a city after tricking them into having them all circumcised. While the men were unable to fight properly, they were slaughtered in retaliation, because the prince of that city had raped Dinah, the sister of Simeon and Levi. This could have been the fate of Israel here in Joshua 5.

d. Till they were healed: So, not only did Israel cross over the Jordan at a militarily undesirable place (right in front of Jericho, the strongest military outpost of the Canaanites), they also incapacitated their army for several days. They did this because they trusted God, and His directions, instead of their own wisdom.

i. They were put in the place where they could trust in nothing but God alone - a hard place, but a good place.

ii. God only asked this of them after He showed His greatness by the Jordan River crossing. When we remember all the things the power of God has done in our lives, we are willing to trust Him with a radical obedience.

3. (9) The effect: God rolls away their reproach.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, “This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” Therefore the

name of the place is called Gilgal to this day.

a. **This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you:** This **reproach** was their shame from **Egypt**, the shame of their degrading slavery.

i. The reproach was rolled away by their radical trust and obedience to God, by taking the specific action He told them to.

b. **Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal:** God called Israel to a place where they saw themselves as they were in Him. By faith, they could see themselves as an obedient, trusting people, and to stop seeing themselves as they were in their slavery and bondage.

i. Of course, this is the same work God wants to do in us, taking away the dishonor and shame of our previous sin and rebellion, and seeing ourselves as who we are in Jesus.

B. The third work at Gilgal: A redemption remembered.

1. (10-11) The Passover is celebrated: looking back to their redemption from Egypt.

Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day.

a. **And kept the Passover:** The original Passover itself could never be repeated, but there was power in its remembrance. They were to always live remembering that they were a people delivered and remembering God's work of deliverance.

b. **After the Passover:** In the same way, we are to be in constant remembrance of our redemption at Calvary and live our lives in the shadow of the cross.

2. (12) *A new source of provision: God stops the manna.*

Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.

a. **Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land:** When the people were able to provide for themselves from the rich produce of Canaan, God stopped the manna. He didn't want them to get lazy, but to enter into a new partnership of trust with Him.

i. You had to trust God to bring the manna every day; but you also had to trust Him to provide for you through other means.

b. **They ate the food of the land of Canaan that year:** God always provides; but He is perfectly free to change the source of His provision from time to time. We need to trust in Him, not in His manner of provision, or we will stumble when that changes.

i. The city of Gilgal became a beachhead and camp for Israel in their conquest of Canaan. They returned there after battle and remembered, finding strength in the remembrance of the memorial, their obedience, and their redemption.

ii. It is good to have a place like Gilgal in our life. This is a place where we first come into God's promises, a place of memorial, a place of obedience and redemption.

3. (13-15) *Joshua meets with the **Commander of the army of the LORD.***

And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?" Then the Commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand *is* holy." And Joshua did so.

a. **Behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand:** Joshua boldly approaches this mysterious Man with a drawn sword. As a shepherd over God's people, he has a responsibility to see if this man is a friend or a foe.

b. **Are you for us or for our adversaries:** This was a logical question to this impressive Man. The response of the Man was curious, almost elusive. "**No**" was not a proper answer for Joshua's question.

i. In a sense, the Man refuses to answer Joshua's question because it is not the right question, and it is not the most important question to be asked at the time.

ii. The question really wasn't if the LORD was on Joshua's side. The proper question was if Joshua was on the LORD's side.

c. **Commander of the army of the LORD:** This was God Himself pulling rank on Joshua, who himself was a great military leader - but he was not **Commander** in Chief.

i. We know that this Being, standing before Joshua, was God. Though the title **Commander of the army of the LORD** could perhaps apply to an angel (such as Michael, based on a passage like Rev 12:7), Joshua's falling down, and worshipping is inconsistent with angels, who never receive worship (Rev 22:8).

ii. **Army of the LORD** here is used in a way that implies that the armies commanded are *angelic* armies. This is a Being who commands angels.

iii. As well, Joshua refers to the angel as **my LORD**; but most of all, the command to remove his sandals (a picture of our humanity and contact with a "dirty" world), was to Joshua (who read and knew

Exo 3:4-6 because he was in God's word) clear proof that the Man standing before him was the voice from the burning bush.

iv. The idea of Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, appearing as a man before Bethlehem is provocative, but logical. We know that He *existed* before Bethlehem (Mic 5:2); why should He *not*, on isolated but important occasions, appear in bodily form? This idea is also evident in passages like Gen 18:16-33; Gen 32:24-30, and Jdg 13:1-23.

c. **And Joshua did so:** Joshua's total submission to Jesus Christ shows that he knows who is really in charge. It also is a virtual guarantee of victory for Israel. When we follow after the **Commander of the army of the LORD**, how can we lose?

i. Why did Jesus come to Israel at this strategic time?

- He had come to instruct Joshua in the plan to capture Jericho. Joshua will carry out a plan in the following chapter that is so improbable it could *only* have been initiated at the direct command of God.

- Most of all, He had come to conquer Israel - before Israel could conquer anything else in the promised land, they had to be conquered by God - and Joshua's total submission shows that they are conquered by Him. This is the missing element in a life of victory for many Christians; they have not been, and are not continually being, conquered by God.

The Fall of Jericho

Jos 6:1 The gates of Jericho were kept shut and guarded to keep the Israelites out. No one could enter or leave the city.

Jos 6:2 The LORD said to Joshua, "I am putting into your hands Jericho, with its king and all its brave soldiers.

Jos 6:3 You and your soldiers are to march around the city once a day for six days.

Jos 6:4 Seven priests, each carrying a trumpet, are to go in front of the Covenant Box. On the seventh day you and your soldiers are to march around the city seven times while the priests blow the trumpets.

Jos 6:5 Then they are to sound one long note. As soon as you hear it, all the people are to give a loud shout, and the city walls will collapse. Then the whole army will go straight into the city."

Jos 6:6 Joshua called the priests and told them, "Take the Covenant Box, and seven of you go in front of it, carrying trumpets."

Jos 6:7 Then he ordered the people to start marching around the city, with an advance guard going on ahead of the LORD's Covenant Box.

Jos 6:8 (8-9) So, just as Joshua had ordered, an advance guard started out ahead of the priests who were blowing trumpets; behind these came the priests who were carrying the Covenant Box, followed by a rear guard. All this time the trumpets were sounding.

Jos 6:10 But Joshua had ordered the people not to shout, not to say a word until he gave the order.

Jos 6:11 So he had this group of men take the LORD's Covenant Box around the city one time. Then they came back to camp and spent the night there.

Jos 6:12 (12-13) Joshua got up early the next morning, and for the second time the priests and soldiers marched around the city in the same order as the day before: first, the advance guard; next, the seven priests blowing the seven trumpets; then, the priests carrying the LORD's Covenant Box; and finally, the rear guard. All this time the trumpets were sounding.

Jos 6:14 On this second day they again marched around the city one time and then returned to camp. They did this for six days.

Jos 6:15 On the seventh day they got up at daybreak and marched seven times around the city in the same way—this was the only day that they marched around it seven times.

Jos 6:16 The seventh time around, when the priests were about to sound the trumpets, Joshua ordered the people to shout, and he said, "The LORD has given you the city!

Jos 6:17 The city and everything in it must be totally destroyed as an offering to the LORD. Only the prostitute Rahab and her household will be spared, because she hid our spies.

Jos 6:18 But you are not to take anything that is to be destroyed; if you do, you will bring trouble and destruction on the Israelite camp.

Jos 6:19 Everything made of silver, gold, bronze, or iron is set apart for the LORD. It is to be put in the LORD's treasury."

Jos 6:20 So the priests blew the trumpets. As soon as the people heard it, they gave a loud shout, and the walls

collapsed. Then all the army went straight up the hill into the city and captured it.

Jos 6:21 With their swords they killed everyone in the city, men and women, young and old. They also killed the cattle, sheep, and donkeys.

Jos 6:22 Joshua then told the two men who had served as spies, "Go into the prostitute's house, and bring her and her family out, as you promised her."

Jos 6:23 So they went and brought Rahab out, along with her father and mother, her brothers, and the rest of her family. They took them all, family and slaves, to safety near the Israelite camp.

Jos 6:24 Then they set fire to the city and burned it to the ground, along with everything in it, except the things made of gold, silver, bronze, and iron, which they took and put in the LORD's treasury.

Jos 6:25 But Joshua spared the lives of the prostitute Rahab and all her relatives, because she had hidden the two spies that he had sent to Jericho. (Her descendants have lived in Israel to this day.)

Jos 6:26 At this time Joshua issued a solemn warning: "Anyone who tries to rebuild the city of Jericho will be under the LORD's curse. Whoever lays the foundation will lose his oldest son; Whoever builds the gates will lose his youngest."

Jos 6:27 So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame spread through the whole country.

Joshua 6:1-27

Joshua 6 - The Fall of Jericho

A. Obedience before the fall of the city of Jericho.

1. (1-5) Instructions for the battle.

Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in. And the LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, *and* the mighty men of valor. You shall march around the city, all *you* men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days. And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. It shall come to pass, when they make a long *blast* with the ram's horn, *and* when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him."

a. Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel: Jericho itself was on full alert; from a human perspective, this would be a hard, if not impossible, battle. Yet from God's perspective, the battle was already over, because He can say to Joshua **I *have***(in the past tense) **given Jericho into your hand.**

i. Up to this point everything had been more or less preliminary and preparatory. Now the real task before them must be faced and tackled. The Canaanites must be dispossessed if Israel is to occupy what God has promised them.

ii. Jericho was not an exceptionally large city; but it was an important, formidable fortress city. If Israel could defeat Jericho, they could defeat anything else that would face them in Canaan. Again, we see the wisdom of God as opposed to human wisdom, in that Israel faces their most difficult opponent first.

b. You shall march around the city: The method of warfare was one that made absolutely no sense according to military intelligence. It required total dependence on God.

i. It required great faith from Joshua because he had to explain and lead the nation in this plan.

ii. It required great faith from the elders and the nation, because they had to follow Joshua in this plan.

c. The wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him:

It was a plan for victory whereby it would clearly be the work of the LORD. Yet God gave them something to do, so that Israel could work in partnership with God.

i. Obviously, it was something that God could have done without Israel's help at all, but He wanted them to be a part of His work - as He wants us to be a part of His work today.

2. (6-7) Joshua tells the priests and the people.

Then Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD." And he said to the people, "Proceed, and march around the city, and let him who is armed advance before the ark of the LORD."

a. Then Joshua the son of Nun called the priests:

Joshua had to tell the priests, because what they were asked to do was unusual. Normally, priests and the ark of the covenant did not go with Israel to battle.

b. Take up the ark of the covenant: The ark would be prominent in this victory, even as it was in the crossing of the Jordan River. Israel had to keep their hearts and minds on the LORD who was present with them, instead

of putting their hearts and minds on the difficulty of the task in front of them.

c. **And he said to the people:** Joshua had to tell the people, because what they were asked to do was unusual. This was no customary way to conquer a walled, fortified city.

3. (8-14) The march of the first six days.

So it was, when Joshua had spoken to the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD advanced and blew the trumpets, and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them. The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while *the priests* continued blowing the trumpets. Now Joshua had commanded the people, saying, "You shall not shout or make any noise with your voice, nor shall a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I say to you, 'Shout!' Then you shall shout." So he had the ark of the LORD circle the city, going around *it* once. Then they came into the camp and lodged in the camp. And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. Then seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually and blew with the trumpets. And the armed men went before them. But the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while *the priests* continued blowing the trumpets. And the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. So they did six days.

a. **When Joshua had spoken to the people:** Joshua does not hesitate to do what the LORD has told him to do. Often, our delays to obey God show that we really don't believe Him.

b. **So he had the ark of the LORD circle the city, going around it once:** Jericho was not a large city; they could easily march around it in a day's time. As the people of Jericho saw the Israelites marching around their city, they probably had a sense of both awe and horror.

c. **So they did six days:** It took *courage* for Israel to do this; Israel was wide open to attack during this time, and it would have been easy for the people of Jericho to attack them from the high position of the walls.

d. **So they did six days:** It took *endurance* for Israel to do this; the march was for six days, and they had to persist in something that didn't seem to make much sense.

e. **So they did six days:** In this, the *helplessness* of Israel was revealed; through six days of silent marching, they had a good look at the walls that seemed to be impenetrable - they knew that this was a battle bigger than they were.

4. (15-16) *The march of the seventh day.*

But it came to pass on the seventh day that they rose early, about the dawning of the day, and marched around the city seven times in the same manner. On that day only they marched around the city seven times. And the seventh time it happened, when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people: "Shout, for the LORD has given you the city!"

a. **On the seventh day:** This march took place over a period of seven days, meaning that Israel had to have marched on a Sabbath; but this would be a work of God's sovereign grace and power, not of human works.

b. **Shout, for the LORD has given you the city:** The command was given for the people to **shout**. After the

days of silence, this comes as a recognition that God would now give them what He had promised. **The LORD has given you the city!**

5. (17-19) *The command to destroy the city and to save Rahab is given.*

"Now the city shall be doomed by the LORD to destruction, it and all who *are* in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who *are* with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, *are* consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD."

a. **Only Rahab the harlot shall live:** Joshua is careful to take care of Rahab. Her faith in the living God would find support by God's people.

b. **By all means abstain from the accursed things:** Joshua had to command the people of Israel to stay away from **the accursed things**. By this he means the idols and things associated with the demonic and depraved worship of the people of Canaan.

i. The severe judgment that is brought against Jericho, and all of Canaan didn't come because they were in the "way" of God's people. It came because this was a people who were in total rebellion against God and in league with the occult, as the artifacts recovered from this period demonstrate.

c. **But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, *are* consecrated to the LORD:** All the valuables belong to God; Jericho is the "first fruits" city of

Canaan, and so the valuables are set apart to **the treasury of the LORD**.

B. The taking of the city of Jericho.

1. (20-21) *The walls come down and the city is destroyed.*

So the people shouted when *the priests* blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.

a. **The wall fell down flat:** This miracle was beyond normal expectation; no other city had been conquered this way. Israel couldn't depend on their prior experience or what had happened for others in battle. All they had was God's promise (Jos 6:5), but they believed that promise and acted according to that belief.

i. We shouldn't be surprised when God fulfills His promise, but we often are. We wonder if the Israelites were surprised when **the wall fell down flat**. The people of Jericho were no doubt surprised.

b. **They utterly destroyed all that was in the city:** Why was Israel commanded to practice such complete destruction? Because the greatest sins of the Canaanites were spiritual: *When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a*

medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you. (

Deu 18:9-14)

i. Such judgment seems harsh to us because it *is* harsh - and we must recognize, that at unique times, God has commanded that such judgment come to pass. It may happen either through an army that He has used (as is the case here), or through judgment that He directly brings (such as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen 19:24-25).

c. **They took the city:** Israel **took**, after God had *given* (Jos 6:2). It was clear that God gave, but that Israel had to *take* by obedient, persistent faith.

i. So it is with all victory in the Christian life - God gives it to us in Jesus Christ; but we must take it from Him by obedient, persistent faith.

2. (22-25) *Finishing up the battle.*

But Joshua had said to the two men who had spied out the country, "Go into the harlot's house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her." And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. But they burned the city and all that *was* in it with fire. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury

of the house of the LORD. And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father's household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

a. **Bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her:** Rahab and her household were saved. They coupled their faith in the God of Israel with a willingness to follow through on what God's messengers told them to do: stay at the house with the scarlet cord hanging from the window (Jos 2:17-19).

b. **They burned the city and all that was in it with fire... Joshua spared Rahab the harlot:** In this, we see a contrast between judgment and salvation. All of Jericho heard about the God of Israel (Jos 2:8-11), but only Rahab responded positively in faith towards God with that knowledge.

c. **So she dwells in Israel to this day:** This shows that Joshua was written at the time of Joshua; this was not the fanciful re-construction of an imaginative writer working centuries after the fact.

3. (26-27) *Joshua curses the man who would re-fortify Jericho.*

Then Joshua charged *them* at that time, saying, "Cursed *be* the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates." So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout all the country.

a. **Cursed be the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho:** This was fulfilled in 1Ki 16:34, which says *In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn,*

and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the LORD, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun.

b. This completes the story of Israel's victory at Jericho. We can learn from the things that marked their victory.

- *Faith*: Joshua and Israel believed the battle plan.
- *Obedience*: Joshua and Israel followed the battle plan exactly.
- *Courage*: Israel followed the battle plan despite danger.
- *Endurance*: Israel followed the battle plan over a period of time, even when it seemed that nothing was happening.
- Israel *did not* rely on carnal scheming and worldly methods; their trust was in the *LORD*, not in human ingenuity.

Israel Defeated at Ai

Jos 7:1 The LORD's command to Israel not to take from Jericho anything that was to be destroyed was not obeyed. A man named Achan disobeyed that order, and so the LORD was furious with the Israelites. (Achan was the son of Carmi and grandson of Zabdi, and belonged to the clan of Zerah, a part of the tribe of Judah.)

Jos 7:2 Joshua sent some men from Jericho to Ai, a city east of Bethel, near Bethaven, with orders to go and explore the land. When they had done so,

Jos 7:3 they reported back to Joshua: "There is no need for everyone to attack Ai. Send only about two or three thousand men. Don't send the whole army up there to fight; it is not a large city."

Jos 7:4 So about three thousand Israelites made the attack, but they were forced to retreat.

Jos 7:5 The men of Ai chased them from the city gate as far as some quarries and killed about thirty-six of them on the way down the hill. Then the Israelites lost their courage and were afraid.

Jos 7:6 Joshua and the leaders of Israel tore their clothes in grief, threw themselves to the ground before the LORD's Covenant Box, and lay there till evening, with dust on their heads to show their sorrow.

Jos 7:7 And Joshua said, "Sovereign LORD! Why did you bring us across the Jordan at all? To turn us over to the Amorites? To destroy us? Why didn't we just stay on the other side of the Jordan?"

Jos 7:8 What can I say, O Lord, now that Israel has retreated from the enemy?

Jos 7:9 The Canaanites and everyone else in the country will hear about it. They will surround us and kill every one of us! And then what will you do to protect your honor?"

The Sin of Achan

Jos 7:10 The LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why are you lying on the ground like this?"

Jos 7:11 Israel has sinned! They have broken the agreement with me that I ordered them to keep. They have taken some of the things condemned to destruction. They stole them, lied about it, and put them with their own things.

Jos 7:12 This is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies. They retreat from them because they themselves have now been condemned to destruction! I will not stay with you any longer unless you destroy the things you were ordered not to take!

Jos 7:13 Get up! Purify the people and get them ready to come before me. Tell them to be ready tomorrow, because I, the LORD God of Israel, have this to say: 'Israel, you have in your possession some things that I ordered you to

destroy! You cannot stand against your enemies until you get rid of these things!'

Jos 7:14 So tell them that in the morning they will be brought forward, tribe by tribe. The tribe that I pick out will then come forward, clan by clan. The clan that I pick out will come forward, family by family. The family that I pick out will come forward, one by one.

Jos 7:15 The one who is then picked out and found with the condemned goods will be burned, along with his family and everything he owns, for he has brought terrible shame on Israel and has broken my covenant."

Jos 7:16 Early the next morning Joshua brought Israel forward, tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was picked out.

Jos 7:17 He brought the tribe of Judah forward, clan by clan, and the clan of Zerah was picked out. Then he brought the clan of Zerah forward, family by family, and the family of Zabdi was picked out.

Jos 7:18 He then brought Zabdi's family forward, one by one, and Achan, the son of Carmi and grandson of Zabdi, was picked out.

Jos 7:19 Joshua said to him, "My son, tell the truth here before the LORD, the God of Israel, and confess. Tell me now what you have done. Don't try to hide it from me."

Jos 7:20 "It's true," Achan answered. "I have sinned against the LORD, Israel's God, and this is what I did.

Jos 7:21 Among the things we seized I saw a beautiful Babylonian cloak, about five pounds of silver, and a bar of gold weighing over one pound. I wanted them so much that I took them. You will find them buried inside my tent, with the silver at the bottom."

Jos 7:22 So Joshua sent some men, who ran to the tent and found that the condemned things really were buried there, with the silver at the bottom.

Jos 7:23 They brought them out of the tent, took them to Joshua and all the Israelites, and laid them down in the presence of the LORD.

Jos 7:24 Joshua, along with all the people of Israel, seized Achan, the silver, the cloak, the bar of gold, together with Achan's sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys, and sheep, his tent, and everything else he owned; and they took them to Trouble Valley.

Jos 7:25 And Joshua said, "Why have you brought such trouble on us? The LORD will now bring trouble on you!" All the people then stoned Achan to death; they also stoned and burned his family and possessions.

Jos 7:26 They put a huge pile of stones over him, which is there to this day. That is why that place is still called Trouble Valley. Then the LORD was no longer furious.

Joshua 7:1-26

Joshua 7 - Defeat at Ai and Achan's Sin

A. Defeat at Ai.

1. (1) Not all of Israel obeyed the law of the devoted things.

But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel.

a. **The children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things:** Joshua commanded the nation in Jos 6:18 that they should not take of any of the accursed things, those things that were associated with the demonic and debasing worship and practices of the Canaanites.

b. **The accursed things:** The wars fought by Israel in Canaan were not to be plundering wars of personal gain;

they were an unusual, sacred instrument in God's hand, used for judgment against a society ripe for judgment.

c. **So the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel:** Israel could not be defeated by the Canaanites, but they could defeat themselves by alienating themselves from God's plan and power.

2. (2-3) Spies report from the city of Ai.

Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the country." So the men went up and spied out Ai. And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few."

a. **So the men went up and spied out Ai:** The recommendation to send only **two or three thousand men** was either a response of faith or self-confidence. In the end it did not matter; in their disobedience, they could have sent 100,000 troops and it would have made no difference.

b. **Do not weary the people there, for the people of Ai are few:** Israel's success depended on their own state of being conquered by God; Achan's rebellion showed that in that respect, they were not conquered by Him - and therefore open to defeat.

3. (4-5) Israel is defeated at Ai.

So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

a. **So about three thousand men went up there from the people:** Joshua, a wise military leader, commanded the larger number recommended by his military intelligence to be sent - but it made no difference. **They fled before the men of Ai.**

b. **And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men:** The thirty-six men killed were thirty-six more than were killed at Jericho, which was thought to be a much more difficult city to conquer. Though this number was small from a military standpoint, what it meant was staggering to Israel. It meant that Israel *could* be defeated in the Promised Land.

i. The defeat at Ai showed that what mattered was not the strength of the opponent, but the help of God. Without God's help, all would be lost.

c. **Therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water:** The people of Israel had good reason to be afraid. Their panic was completely logical, because if God did not fight for them, they had nothing to expect but defeat.

B. Joshua goes before the *LORD* in time of crisis.

1. (6-9) *Joshua fears that it was unfaithfulness on God's part that had caused the defeat.*

Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. And Joshua said, "Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all; to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will

hear *it*, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?"

a. **Then Joshua tore his clothes:** To tear your clothes and to put dust on your head both displayed *mourning*. Joshua is not only mourning the death of thirty-six men, but more so, **he and the elders of Israel** mourn the loss of the blessing and guidance of God.

b. **Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all:** For Joshua and the elders of Israel, this defeat was a national calamity. They do not take this defeat in stride; there is no "win a few, lose a few" mentality at work. They know that every battle matters, and there is always a *reason* for defeat, it doesn't "just happen."

c. **Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan:** Joshua knew that if God's hand of blessing and guidance were not with them, it would be better if they had not come to the Promised Land at all. If God did not deliver them, all would be lost.

i. How different from so much of Christianity today! We are often so filled with *man's* programs and power, that if God withdrew His blessing and guidance, it wouldn't be missed for a long time.

d. **Then what will You do for Your great name:** This shows that Joshua's over-riding concern was for the glory of God. Our greatest disappointment when we stumble should be that we have possibly caused reproach on the **great name** of God.

2. (10-11) *The real reason for defeat: Israel has sinned.*

So the LORD said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded

them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put *it* among their own stuff."

a. **Israel has sinned:** The good news was that God had not failed the nation. The bad news was that this defeat was due to the sin of Israel. Joshua doesn't need to fear that the problem is with God - it is almost comforting to find that the problem is with us!

i. This is why God told Joshua to **get up**. He didn't need to beg God to change *His* heart towards Israel. Joshua had to change Israel's heart before God.

ii. God's provision is for us to live a life of increasing victory. But He will not make defeat *impossible*, taking away our ability to choose good or evil. He always makes it possible for us *not* to sin; here, Israel sinned, but they didn't have to.

b. **Israel has sinned... they... they... they also:** God says that **Israel** had sinned, not only one man. It is staggering to think that the whole nation was found guilty, and thirty-six men were dead, all for the sin of one man and his family.

i. Paul speaks in similar terms concerning sin in the church; regarding sin among the Corinthian church, he says *Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?* (1Co 5:6) A small amount of sin accepted and tolerated among believers can infect the whole group.

ii. In this sense, the acceptance and toleration of the sin is worse than the sin itself, so it must be dealt with strictly.

c. **For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived:** We should understand exactly what the sin was. Someone in

Israel took things that were devoted to God, devoted either by their giving to His tabernacle, or by their complete destruction. One man stole from God, in the same way we steal from Him when we do not give Him what he directs us to give.

i. Lev 22:14; Lev 27:15; Lev 27:19; Lev 27:31 each demonstrate that in Israel, if you wanted to keep something that belonged to God, you had to pay a 20% (one-fifth) penalty. This was the same amount required for restitution in theft (Lev 6:4-5).

ii. The New Testament teaches us that giving should be regular and proportional (1Co 16:1-2), that it should be generous, purposeful, and cheerful (2Co 9:6-8). When we don't give as God directs us, we must regard it as sin and repent of it.

3. (12-13) *The effect of the sin: they now have no power before their enemies.*

"Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, *but* turned *their* backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. Get up, sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the LORD God of Israel: "*There is* an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you."

a. **Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies:** Israel could not fight in God's power and presence unless they walked in obedience to God. Israel was under a covenant with God that promised blessing on their obedience, and also promised curses upon their disobedience.

i. We are not under that kind of covenant. Our position with God is made by the work of Jesus on our behalf, not our own works. Yet if we want God's power and presence in our own battles, we must walk in fellowship with Him, and this fellowship is hindered by our own sin and rebellion.

ii. Our position before God is secure in Jesus; but our fellowship with Him is hindered by our own sin (1Jn 1:6). This fellowship with God is our wellspring of power to live in the Spirit.

b. **They have become doomed to destruction:** It is sobering to realize that a body in sin has no power before their enemies. It is wonderful to realize that once the sin has been dealt with, God's power can again flow in our Christian life.

c. **You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you:** When God deals with a particular area of sin, and when we resist His work, His *mercy* makes us to fail in battle. We are most dangerous when we think we are "winning" battles with our own self-reliance.

4. (14-15) *Instructions for judgment of the sin.*

"In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be *that* the tribe which the LORD takes shall come according to families; and the family which the LORD takes shall come by households; and the household which the LORD takes shall come man by man. Then it shall be *that* he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel."

a. **The tribe which the LORD takes:** Though the identity of the sinning family was unknown to Joshua, it was known to God. Secret sin on earth is an open scandal before God. Therefore, we should therefore live our lives with “one set of books,” with one kind of life that can be seen by anybody, anywhere.

b. **Then it shall be that he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire:** Once God dealt with the one sinning individual, blessing could come again on the whole nation.

C. Achan’s sin publicly judged.

1. (16-18) *God exposes the identity of the head of the family that had sinned.*

So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarahites; and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. Then he brought his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

a. **Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken:** This must have been an excruciating experience for Achan. How much better to simply walk in obedience to God!

b. **Achan the son of Carmi:** All this time, Achan certainly remembered exactly what he had taken, and how he wished he had not taken it. But he - and we - should remember the regret of sin *before* we sin, not after.

i. Sin does have its pleasures. Taking those things gave Achan a good feeling. But the penalty of sin,

both within us and upon us, outweighs any of the fleeting pleasures of sin.

2. (19-21) *Joshua confronts Achan, and he confesses.*

Now Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide *it* from me." And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."

a. **My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him:** Even when we sin and try to cover our sin, we can still **give glory to the LORD** by openly and honestly confessing our sin. Hidden sin always has a special power over us.

b. **A beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels:** Measured against the lives of thirty-six men and the welfare of the entire nation, what Achan gained was pretty insignificant. Truly, *the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows* (1Ti 6:10).

c. **I coveted them and took them:** Think of how Achan could have rationalized his sin: "No one will know." "These things won't be missed." "Think of how I'll be admired in this beautiful Babylonian garment." "I'm not hurting anyone." "I deserve this." The excuses can go on and on, but they all fall short.

i. When we are at the terrible place Achan is, we all feel terrible about our sin, wishing we had never done it - may God help us to feel terrible about our sin *before* we do it!

2. (22-26) *The confession confirmed, and judgment executed.*

So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor. And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day.

a. **His sons, his daughters:** Achan's sons and daughters had specific knowledge of the sin because it is unlikely that he could bury so much under their tent without their knowledge. At the same time, they were not necessarily stoned with Achan. Instead of being killed with their father, Achan's children were probably called forth to witness the judgment against their father.

i. We notice the use of the singular in Jos 7:25-26 (**you... you... him... him**), in reference to a person being stoned. The use of the plural in Jos 7:24-25

(**them... them... them**) probably has reference to Achan's possessions, not his children.

b. **The name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day:** The Israelites aptly named this place *Valley of Trouble* (or, *disaster*, as it is in the NIV).

c. **So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger:** Even this kind of sin, when it is dealt with, can be a spring board to victory again. Now Israel was again in position to walk in the power and guidance of God, after they had been conquered by God again.

i. This kind of victory only comes after a *death*. We need to die to such besetting sins, know that *those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires* (Gal 5:24) - the power and victory of Jesus' resurrection are ours as we crucify our flesh with Him every day.

The Fall of Ai

Jos 8:1 The LORD said to Joshua, "Take all the soldiers with you and go on up to Ai. Don't be afraid or discouraged. I will give you victory over the king of Ai; his people, city, and land will be yours.

Jos 8:2 You are to do to Ai and its king what you did to Jericho and its king, but this time you may keep its goods and livestock for yourselves. Prepare to attack the city by surprise from the rear."

Jos 8:3 So Joshua got ready to go to Ai with all his soldiers. He picked out thirty thousand of his best troops and sent them out at night

Jos 8:4 with these orders: "Hide on the other side of the city, but not too far away from it; be ready to attack.

Jos 8:5 My men and I will approach the city. When the men of Ai come out against us, we will turn and run, just as we

did the first time.

Jos 8:6 They will pursue us until we have led them away from the city. They will think that we are running from them, as we did before.

Jos 8:7 Then you will come out of hiding and capture the city. The LORD your God will give it to you.

Jos 8:8 After you have taken the city, set it on fire, just as the LORD has commanded. These are your orders."

Jos 8:9 So Joshua sent them out, and they went to their hiding place and waited there, west of Ai, between Ai and Bethel. Joshua spent the night in camp.

Jos 8:10 Early in the morning Joshua got up and called the soldiers together. Then he and the leaders of Israel led them to Ai.

Jos 8:11 The soldiers with him went toward the main entrance to the city and set up camp on the north side, with a valley between themselves and Ai.

Jos 8:12 He took about five thousand men and put them in hiding west of the city, between Ai and Bethel.

Jos 8:13 The soldiers were arranged for battle with the main camp north of the city and the rest of the men to the west. Joshua spent the night in the valley.

Jos 8:14 When the king of Ai saw Joshua's men, he acted quickly. He and all his men went out toward the Jordan Valley to fight the Israelites at the same place as before, not knowing that he was about to be attacked from the rear.

Jos 8:15 Joshua and his men pretended that they were retreating, and ran away toward the barren country.

Jos 8:16 All the men in the city had been called together to go after them, and as they pursued Joshua, they kept getting farther away from the city.

Jos 8:17 Every man in Ai went after the Israelites, and the city was left wide open, with no one to defend it.

Jos 8:18 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Point your spear at Ai; I am giving it to you." Joshua did as he was told,

Jos 8:19 and as soon as he lifted his hand, the men who had been hiding got up quickly, ran into the city and captured it. They immediately set the city on fire.

Jos 8:20 When the men of Ai looked back, they saw the smoke rising to the sky. There was no way for them to escape, because the Israelites who had run toward the barren country now turned around to attack them.

Jos 8:21 When Joshua and his men saw that the others had taken the city and that it was on fire, they turned around and began killing the men of Ai.

Jos 8:22 The Israelites in the city now came down to join the battle. So the men of Ai found themselves completely surrounded by Israelites, and they were all killed. No one got away, and no one lived through it

Jos 8:23 except the king of Ai. He was captured and taken to Joshua.

Jos 8:24 The Israelites killed every one of the enemy in the barren country where they had chased them. Then they went back to Ai and killed everyone there.

Jos 8:25 (25-26) Joshua kept his spear pointed at Ai and did not put it down until every person there had been killed. The whole population of Ai was killed that day—twelve thousand men and women.

Jos 8:27 The Israelites kept for themselves the livestock and goods captured in the city, as the LORD had told Joshua.

Jos 8:28 Joshua burned Ai and left it in ruins. It is still like that today.

Jos 8:29 He hanged the king of Ai from a tree and left his body there until evening. At sundown Joshua gave orders for the body to be removed, and it was thrown down at the

entrance to the city gate. They covered it with a huge pile of stones, which is still there today.

Joshua Renews the Covenant

Jos 8:30 Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel.

Jos 8:31 He made it according to the instructions that Moses, the LORD's servant, had given the Israelites, as it says in the Law of Moses: "an altar made of stones which have not been cut with iron tools." On it they offered burnt sacrifices to the LORD, and they also presented their fellowship offerings.

Jos 8:32 There, with the Israelites looking on, Joshua made on the stones a copy of the Law which Moses had written.

Jos 8:33 The Israelites, with their leaders, officers, and judges, as well as the foreigners among them, stood on two sides of the LORD's Covenant Box, facing the levitical priests who carried it. Half of the people stood with their backs to Mount Gerizim and the other half with their backs to Mount Ebal. The LORD's servant Moses had commanded them to do this when the time came for them to receive the blessing.

Jos 8:34 Joshua then read aloud the whole Law, including the blessings and the curses, just as they are written in the book of the Law.

Jos 8:35 Every one of the commandments of Moses was read by Joshua to the whole gathering, which included women and children, as well as the foreigners living among them.

Joshua 8:1-35

Joshua 8 - Victory over Ai

A. Plans for victory.

1. (1-2) God encourages Joshua and gives him instructions.

Now the LORD said to Joshua: “Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves. Lay an ambush for the city behind it.”

a. **Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed:** This was the first key to regaining victory. They had to *receive encouragement from God*. Though Israel stumbled through Achan’s sin as shown in Joshua 7, they dealt with the failure and now had to move on.

i. It is often the most difficult to regain lost ground such as Ai. When we have failed at some point in our Christian lives, we need to know how to get back on track.

ii. What is past is past. We must deal with it before God in repentance and dying to self, and then look forward to what He has for us right now.

iii. God wants us to use our failures in a good way, to use them as a foundation for great victory in the LORD.

b. **Take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai:** God wasn’t despondent or depressed, and He didn’t want Joshua or the nation of Israel to be either. Now it was time to get busy and set about being victorious for the LORD, because He has not abandoned them.

c. **Only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves:** God allows them to keep the spoil from the city of Ai. How foolish the sin of Achan

seems now! He could have had all his heart desired if he only waited on the LORD for it.

d. **Lay an ambush for the city behind it:** God gives Joshua a plan for conquering the city of Ai, and now he must follow it. When we need to regain the victory, we *must follow God's plan*.

2. (3-8) Plans made for an ambush upon Ai.

So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai; and Joshua chose thirty thousand mighty men of valor and sent them away by night. And he commanded them, saying: "Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind the city. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you be ready. Then I and all the people who *are* with me will approach the city; and it will come about, when they come out against us as at the first, that we shall flee before them. For they will come out after us till we have drawn them from the city, for they will say, '*They are fleeing before us as at the first.*' Therefore we will flee before them. Then you shall rise from the ambush and seize the city, for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. And it will be, when you have taken the city, *that* you shall set the city on fire. According to the commandment of the LORD you shall do. See, I have commanded you."

a. **Joshua chose thirty thousand mighty men of valor:** This time Joshua did not send 3,000 men as before (Jos 7:4). Now he sent 30,000 **mighty men of valor**. When we need to regain victory, we must *use every resource, and the best resources for victory*.

b. **And he commanded them, saying: "Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind the city":** Though God had given Joshua the general plan Jos 8:2, He left it up to Joshua's experience and

sanctified common sense to lay out the specific plan of battle.

3. (9-10) Joshua stays with the people.

Joshua therefore sent them out; and they went to lie in ambush, and stayed between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua lodged that night among the people. Then Joshua rose up early in the morning and mustered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai.

a. **But Joshua lodged that night among the people:** Joshua was especially near his people during this crucial time of trying to regain victory. The people needed to know he was near, and they needed to follow his leadership.

b. **Among the people:** If we will regain victory, we must *live with and follow Jesus*, who is our Joshua. He is always near to us at these crucial times in our Christian life, and always goes first to lead us into battle.

B. Victory at Ai.

1. (11-13) Preparations for battle: Joshua and the people do exactly what the LORD commanded them.

And all the people of war who were with him went up and drew near; and they came before the city and camped on the north side of Ai. Now a valley lay between them and Ai. So he took about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. And when they had set the people, all the army that was on the north of the city, and its rear guard on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley.

a. **All the people of war who were with him went up and drew near:** If Israel will regain victory, they

must *take the offensive*. They don't wait for Ai to bring the battle to them, bring the battle to Ai.

b. **Joshua went that night into the midst:** We often see the battle against sin in mainly negative terms, about what *not* to do. But we must take the offensive against the powers of darkness and temptation and be busy about doing what the LORD would have us to do.

2. (14-17) *The ambush works; the fighting men of Ai leave the city.*

Now it happened, when the king of Ai saw *it*, that the men of the city hurried and rose early and went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at an appointed place before the plain. But he did not know that *there was* an ambush against him behind the city. And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. So all the people who *were* in Ai were called together to pursue them. And they pursued Joshua and were drawn away from the city. There was not a man left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel. So they left the city open and pursued Israel.

a. **When the king of Ai saw *it*, that the men of the city hurried and rose early and went out against Israel to battle:** The men of Ai tried the exact same strategy against Israel as before. Generally, Satan will stick with a strategy against us until it doesn't work anymore.

b. **And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them:** God directed Joshua to use a completely different strategy against Ai. When we see the diversity of God's methods, we remember it is because He is a personal God.

3. (18-29) *Ai is totally defeated and burnt to the ground.*

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Stretch out the spear that *is* in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand." And Joshua stretched out the spear that *was* in his hand toward the city. So *those in* ambush arose quickly out of their place; they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand, and they entered the city and took it, and hurried to set the city on fire. And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and behold, the smoke of the city ascended to heaven. So they had no power to flee this way or that way, and the people who had fled to the wilderness turned back on the pursuers. Now when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and struck down the men of Ai. Then the others came out of the city against them; so they were *caught* in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side. And they struck them down, so that they let none of them remain or escape. But the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua. And it came to pass when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness where they pursued them, and when they all had fallen by the edge of the sword until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword. So it was *that* all who fell that day, both men and women, *were* twelve thousand; all the people of Ai. For Joshua did not draw back his hand, with which he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as booty for themselves, according to the word of the LORD which He had commanded Joshua. So Joshua burned Ai and made it

a heap forever, a desolation to this day. And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until evening. And as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his corpse down from the tree, cast it at the entrance of the gate of the city, and raise over it a great heap of stones *that remains* to this day.

a. And they struck them down, so that they let none of them remain or escape: The victory and God's judgment is complete. Because of God's faithfulness to Israel and Israel's faithfulness to God, this is not a halfway victory.

b. Joshua did not draw back his hand, with which he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai: If Israel will regain victory, they must *show no mercy to their enemy*, but crush the enemy completely at every opportunity.

i. We can summarize the keys for victory from this chapter:

- Be encouraged.
- Follow the LORD's plan.
- Use every resource, and the best resources.
- Live with and look to Jesus.
- Go on the offensive.
- Show no mercy to your enemy.

c. According to the word of the LORD which He had commanded Joshua: So far, Israel's experience is an illustration of their whole history, and the spiritual history of many Christians.

- Obedience followed by victory.
- Victory followed by blessing.
- Blessing followed by pride and disobedience.

- Disobedience followed by defeat.
- Defeat followed by judgment.
- Judgment followed by repentance.
- Repentance followed by obedience.
- Obedience followed by victory, and the cycle continues.

C. Blessing and cursing on Ebal and Gerizim.

1. (30-31) An altar built at Mount Ebal.

Now Joshua built an altar to the LORD God of Israel in Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: "an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool." And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings.

a. **Now Joshua built an altar to the LORD God of Israel in Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses:** This is in fulfillment of Deuteronomy 27-28. There, the LORD told Israel, when they came to the Promised Land, to come to these mountains, build an altar, sacrifice to the LORD, and read the law.

b. **And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings:** We see an appropriate act of worship, and consecration unto God, following a great victory. God always should get the glory. Even when men looked at the altar, they would not see elaborate carvings - though beautiful - drawing attention to man's work (**whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool**).

2. (32-35) Blessings read from Mount Gerizim, curses from Mount Ebal.

And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them *were* in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them.

a. He wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written: In this act of obedience we see Joshua as a *man of the Book*, obeying the command of Jos 1:8. We also see Israel as a *people of the Book* ordering their lives after God's Word.

i. This was even at a cost or inconvenience. The distance from Ai to Ebal and Gerizim was a long way to move all the tribes of Israel, from 20 to 25 miles.

b. Half of them were in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal: This was a beautiful place to do this, and the whole nation could hear this reading of the Law. The area has a natural amphitheater effect because of the contour of the hills.

i. According to Deuteronomy 27-28, the altar was built on the mountain of cursing, Mount Ebal. We need the covering sacrifice exactly at the point where

our sin and failures are revealed, and God's curse is pronounced on our sin.

ii. This event, at this place, shows that Israel controls the middle of Canaan and the highlands. The rest is a matter of taking advantage of this strategic position.

The Gibeonite Deception

Jos 9:1 The victories of Israel became known to all the kings west of the Jordan—in the hills, in the foothills, and all along the coastal plain of the Mediterranean Sea as far north as Lebanon; these were the kings of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Jos 9:2 They all came together and joined forces to fight against Joshua and the Israelites.

Jos 9:3 But the people of Gibeon, who were Hivites, heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai,

Jos 9:4 and they decided to deceive him. They went and got some food and loaded their donkeys with worn-out sacks and patched-up wineskins.

Jos 9:5 They put on ragged clothes and worn-out sandals that had been mended. The bread they took with them was dry and moldy.

Jos 9:6 Then they went to the camp at Gilgal and said to Joshua and the Israelites, "We have come from a distant land. We want you to make a treaty with us."

Jos 9:7 But the Israelites said, "Why should we make a treaty with you? Maybe you live nearby."

Jos 9:8 They said to Joshua, "We are at your service." Joshua asked them, "Who are you? Where do you come from?"

Jos 9:9 Then they told him this story: "We have come from a very distant land, sir, because we have heard of the LORD

your God. We have heard about everything that he did in Egypt

Jos 9:10 and what he did to the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan: King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth.

Jos 9:11 Our leaders and all the people that live in our land told us to get some food ready for a trip and to go and meet you. We were told to put ourselves at your service and ask you to make a treaty with us.

Jos 9:12 Look at our bread. When we left home with it and started out to meet you, it was still warm. But look! Now it is dry and moldy.

Jos 9:13 When we filled these wineskins, they were new, but look! They are torn. Our clothes and sandals are worn out from the long trip."

Jos 9:14 The Israelites accepted some food from them, but did not consult the LORD about it.

Jos 9:15 Joshua made a treaty of friendship with the people of Gibeon and allowed them to live. The leaders of the community of Israel gave their solemn promise to keep the treaty.

Jos 9:16 Three days after the treaty had been made, the Israelites learned that these people did indeed live nearby.

Jos 9:17 So the people of Israel started out and three days later arrived at the cities where these people lived: Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath Jearim.

Jos 9:18 But the Israelites could not kill them, because their leaders had made a solemn promise to them in the name of the LORD, Israel's God. All the people complained to the leaders about this,

Jos 9:19 but they answered, "We have made our solemn promise to them in the name of the LORD God of Israel. Now we cannot harm them.

Jos 9:20 We must let them live because of our promise; if we don't, God will punish us.

Jos 9:21 Let them live, but they will have to cut wood and carry water for us." This was what the leaders suggested.

Jos 9:22 Joshua ordered the people of Gibeon to be brought to him, and he asked them, "Why did you deceive us and tell us that you were from far away, when you live right here?

Jos 9:23 Because you did this, God has condemned you. Your people will always be slaves, cutting wood and carrying water for the sanctuary of my God."

Jos 9:24 They answered, "We did it, sir, because we learned that it was really true that the LORD your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you the whole land and to kill the people living in it as you advanced. We did it because we were terrified of you; we were in fear of our lives.

Jos 9:25 Now we are in your power; do with us what you think is right."

Jos 9:26 So this is what Joshua did: he protected them and did not allow the people of Israel to kill them.

Jos 9:27 But at the same time he made them slaves, to cut wood and carry water for the people of Israel and for the LORD's altar. To this day they have continued to do this work in the place where the LORD has chosen to be worshiped.

Joshua 9:1-27

Joshua 9 - The Gibeonite Deception

A. Two different strategies of attack against Israel.

1. (1-2) The southern kings gather together against Israel.

And it came to pass when all the kings who were on this side of the Jordan, in the hills and in the lowland

and in all the coasts of the Great Sea toward Lebanon; the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite; heard *about it*, that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord.

a. When all the kings who were on this side of the Jordan... heard about it: When the Canaanite kings heard how the LORD delivered Jericho to Israel, they had reason to be afraid. When they heard how the LORD gave them victory over Ai, they had reason to be afraid.

b. They gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord: This is a classic, frontal attack - they will try to defeat Israel on the field of battle, in head-to-head competition.

2. (3-6) The Gibeonites approach Joshua and Israel in another way.

But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended, old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* moldy. And they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us."

a. They worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors: The Gibeonites will try to deceive Israel into making a peace treaty with them, though Israel was forbidden to make peace with any of the tribes of Canaan (Exo 23:23-24).

b. **They worked craftily:** Notice the methods of deception used by the Gibeonites. They were clever (**craftily**), they misrepresented themselves (**pretended**), and they even gave false “evidence” of their deception (**old sacks, old wineskins, old and patched sandals, dry and moldy** bread).

c. **From a far country:** Beyond their deceptive appearance, the Gibeonites simply *lied*. They said, “**We have come from a far country**” when of course they had not. All their other devices simply lead to strengthen the deception offered.

B. How Joshua and the leaders of Israel were deceived.

1. (7-13) *The Gibeonites explain their story to Joshua and the leaders of Israel.*

Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, “Perhaps you dwell among us; so how can we make a covenant with you?” But they said to Joshua, “We are your servants.” And Joshua said to them, “Who are you, and where do you come from?” So they said to him: “From a very far country your servants have come, because of the name of the LORD your God; for we have heard of His fame, and all that He did in Egypt, and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan; to Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth. Therefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, ‘Take provisions with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say to them, “We are your servants; now therefore, make a covenant with us.”’ This bread of ours we took hot *for* our provision from our houses on the day we departed to come to you. But now look, it is dry and moldy. And these wineskins which we

filled were new, and see, they are torn; and these our garments and our sandals have become old because of the very long journey."

a. **From a very far country your servants have come:** Plainly, the Gibeonites lied to Israel. But despite their lies, they have a proper admiration and honor for the God of Israel. **Because of the name of the LORD your God; for we have heard of His fame** shows that it is *because* God fights for Israel, they know it would be useless to oppose the nation.

2. (14-15) *Joshua and the leaders of Israel accept the deception of the Gibeonites.*

Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the LORD. So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them.

a. **They did not ask counsel of the LORD:** The Gibeonite deception was clever, and therefore powerful. But the real problem was that Joshua and the leaders of Israel never sought the LORD.

b. **Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions:** This shows that they trusted their senses instead of the LORD. "Look at this bread. Feel and taste how stale it is. Surely, they must have come a long way." They walked by sight, not by faith.

i. How much trouble do we find ourselves in for this very reason: **they did not ask counsel of the LORD?**

c. **So Joshua made peace with them:** Because they believed that the Gibeonites were from a distant land, they made the treaty with them. God allowed Israel to

make treaties with distant nations, but not with the Canaanites.

C. The deception of the Gibeonites uncovered and dealt with.

1. (16-20) Joshua and the leaders of Israel discover they have been deceived, yet they abide by their sworn oath to the Gibeonites.

And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were their neighbors who dwelt near them. Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim. But the children of Israel did not attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation complained against the rulers. Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them. This we will do to them: We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore to them."

a. All the congregation murmured against the rulers: Even though they **murmured** against them, the rulers still knew they had to do what was right and honorable before God: keep their oath, even if it was a bad oath.

i. The rulers of Israel were wise in not allowing one sin (wiping out the Gibeonites) follow another sin (making the oath without seeking the LORD), especially in light of public pressure to do otherwise.

b. Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD God of

Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them”: It is a mark of godliness to hold to an oath, even when it is difficult. *But he honors those who fear the LORD; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change.* (Psa 15:4)

i. It is refreshing to see that going back on their word was not even really a possibility for the rulers of Israel. This was a simple matter, not even up for debate: **we may not touch them.**

c. Because of the oath which we swore to them: Later, King Saul broke this vow to the Gibeonites and his sin brought famine upon Israel in the days of David (2Sa 21:1-9).

i. *Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, “It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites.”* (2Sa 21:1)

2. (21-27) *A glorious punishment for the Gibeonites: Joshua makes them slaves to the LORD.*

And the rulers said to them, “Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them.” Then Joshua called for them, and he spoke to them, saying, “Why have you deceived us, saying, ‘We are very far from you,’ when you dwell near us? Now therefore, you are cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being slaves; woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God.” So they answered Joshua and said, “Because your servants were clearly told that the LORD your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you; therefore we were very much afraid for our lives because of you, and have done this thing. And now, here we are, in your hands;

do with us as it seems good and right to do to us.” So he did to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they did not kill them. And that day Joshua made them woodcutters and water carriers for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, in the place which He would choose, even to this day.

a. **Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation:** Joshua could not kill the Gibeonites, but he could control them by making them perpetual workmen for the tabernacle service. They would serve in menial ways such as cutting wood for the sacrificial fires of the tabernacle and carrying water used in its service.

b. **So they answered Joshua and said:** Significantly, there seems to be no complaint from the Gibeonites. They simply say, **“here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us.”** Essentially, they were happy with the prospect of being incorporated into Israel, and by being made servants of the LORD, even if it was in menial service.

i. In this, the Gibeonites express the same heart David did in Psa 84:10 : *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

ii. It is essential to see that they did this out of a love for the God of Israel, not out of weakness. Indeed, it was said of Gibeon that *all its men were mighty* (Jos 10:2).

c. **Because your servants were clearly told that the LORD your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land... we were very much afraid for our lives because of you, and have done this**

thing: The Gibeonites were not thrilled so much at being wood cutters and water carriers, but in knowing they could be those things for the LORD - and in knowing where they would be if they were *not* serving the LORD.

ii. Do we have the same heart? Can we rejoice in any kind of service, if we see we are in the presence of the LORD as we do it?

ii. The Gibeonites found salvation in the God of Israel much like Rahab did in Joshua 2.

- Both Rahab and the Gibeonites came to the God of Israel as sinners, Rahab as a harlot, and the Gibeonites as liars.

- Both Rahab and the Gibeonites were willing at risk to forsake their former associations and be counted among God's people. The risk of Gibeon was explained in Jos 10:4, where they were a target of attack for their dealings with Israel.

- Both Rahab and the Gibeonites, after they found salvation through the God of Israel, had a rich history.

iii. The Gibeonites after Joshua 9.

- The Gibeonites became servants at the tabernacle, just as Joshua had commanded.

- Gibeon becomes a priestly city; the Ark of the Covenant stayed at Gibeon often in the days of David and Solomon (1Ch 16:39-40; 1Ch 21:29).

- At least one of David's *mighty men* was a Gibeonite (1Ch 12:4).

- God spoke to Solomon at Gibeon (1Ki 3:4).

- Gibeonites were among those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem with Nehemiah (Neh 3:7; Neh 7:25).

- Prophets such as Hananiah the son of Azur came from Gibeon (Jer 28:1).
- These are examples of the great things God can do with people who are sinners but come to Him in humility and love.

The Sun Stands Still

Jos 10:1 Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem, heard that Joshua had captured and totally destroyed Ai and had killed its king, just as he had done to Jericho and its king. He also heard that the people of Gibeon had made peace with the Israelites and were living among them.

Jos 10:2 The people of Jerusalem were greatly alarmed at this because Gibeon was as large as any of the cities that had a king; it was larger than Ai, and its men were good fighters.

Jos 10:3 So Adonizedek sent the following message to King Hoham of Hebron, King Piram of Jarmuth, King Japhia of Lachish, and to King Debir of Eglon:

Jos 10:4 "Come and help me attack Gibeon, because its people have made peace with Joshua and the Israelites."

Jos 10:5 These five Amorite kings, the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon, joined forces, surrounded Gibeon, and attacked it.

Jos 10:6 The men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal: "Do not abandon us, sir! Come at once and help us! Save us! All the Amorite kings in the hill country have joined forces and have attacked us!"

Jos 10:7 So Joshua and his whole army, including the best troops, started out from Gilgal.

Jos 10:8 The LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them. I have already given you the victory. Not one of them will be able to stand against you."

Jos 10:9 All night Joshua and his army marched from Gilgal to Gibeon, and they made a surprise attack on the Amorites.

Jos 10:10 The LORD made the Amorites panic at the sight of Israel's army. The Israelites slaughtered them at Gibeon and pursued them down the mountain pass at Beth Horon, keeping up the attack as far south as Azekah and Makkedah.

Jos 10:11 While the Amorites were running down the pass from the Israelite army, the LORD made large hailstones fall down on them all the way to Azekah. More were killed by the hailstones than by the Israelites.

Jos 10:12 On the day that the LORD gave the men of Israel victory over the Amorites, Joshua spoke to the LORD. In the presence of the Israelites he said, "Sun, stand still over Gibeon; Moon, stop over Aijalon Valley."

Jos 10:13 The sun stood still and the moon did not move until the nation had conquered its enemies. This is written in The Book of Jashar. The sun stood still in the middle of the sky and did not go down for a whole day.

Jos 10:14 Never before, and never since, has there been a day like it, when the LORD obeyed a human being. The LORD fought on Israel's side!

Jos 10:15 After this, Joshua and his army went back to the camp at Gilgal.

Five Amorite Kings Executed

Jos 10:16 The five Amorite kings, however, had escaped and were hiding in the cave at Makkedah.

Jos 10:17 Someone found them, and Joshua was told where they were hiding.

Jos 10:18 He said, "Roll some big stones in front of the entrance to the cave. Place some guards there,

Jos 10:19 but don't stay there yourselves. Keep on after the enemy and attack them from the rear; don't let them get to their cities! The LORD your God has given you victory over them."

Jos 10:20 Joshua and the men of Israel slaughtered them, although some managed to find safety inside their city walls and were not killed.

Jos 10:21 Then all of Joshua's men came back safe to him at the camp at Makkedah. No one in the land dared even to speak against the Israelites.

Jos 10:22 Then Joshua said, "Open the entrance to the cave and bring those five kings out to me."

Jos 10:23 So the cave was opened, and the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon were brought out

Jos 10:24 and taken to Joshua. Joshua then called all the men of Israel to him and ordered the officers who had gone with him to come and put their feet on the necks of the kings. They did so.

Jos 10:25 Then Joshua said to his officers, "Don't be afraid or discouraged. Be determined and confident because this is what the LORD is going to do to all your enemies."

Jos 10:26 Then Joshua killed the kings and hanged them on five trees, where their bodies stayed until evening.

Jos 10:27 At sundown Joshua gave orders, and their bodies were taken down and thrown into the same cave where they had hidden earlier. Large stones were placed at the entrance to the cave, and they are still there.

Jos 10:28 Joshua attacked and captured Makkedah and its king that day. He put everyone in the city to death; no one was left alive. He did to the king of Makkedah what he had done to the king of Jericho.

Conquest of Southern Canaan

Jos 10:29 After this, Joshua and his army went on from Makkedah to Libnah and attacked it.

Jos 10:30 The LORD also gave the Israelites victory over this city and its king. They spared no one, but killed every person in it. They did to the king what they had done to the king of Jericho.

Jos 10:31 After this, Joshua and his army went on from Libnah to Lachish, surrounded it and attacked it.

Jos 10:32 The LORD gave the Israelites victory over Lachish on the second day of the battle. Just as they had done at Libnah, they spared no one, but killed every person in the city.

Jos 10:33 King Horam of Gezer came to the aid of Lachish, but Joshua defeated him and his army and left none of them alive.

Jos 10:34 Next, Joshua and his army went on from Lachish to Eglon, surrounded it and attacked it.

Jos 10:35 They captured it the same day and put everyone there to death, just as they had done at Lachish.

Jos 10:36 After this, Joshua and his army went from Eglon up into the hills to Hebron, attacked it

Jos 10:37 and captured it. They killed the king and everyone else in the city as well as in the nearby towns. Joshua condemned the city to total destruction, just as he had done to Eglon. No one in it was left alive.

Jos 10:38 Then Joshua and his army turned back to Debir and attacked it.

Jos 10:39 He captured it, with its king and all the nearby towns. They put everyone there to death. Joshua did to Debir and its king what he had done to Hebron and to Libnah and its king.

Jos 10:40 Joshua conquered the whole land. He defeated the kings of the hill country, the eastern slopes, and the western foothills, as well as those of the dry country in the

south. He spared no one; everyone was put to death. This was what the LORD God of Israel had commanded.

Jos 10:41 Joshua's campaign took him from Kadesh Barnea in the south to Gaza near the coast, including all the area of Goshen, and as far north as Gibeon.

Jos 10:42 Joshua conquered all these kings and their territory in one campaign because the LORD, Israel's God, was fighting for Israel.

Jos 10:43 After this, Joshua and his army went back to the camp at Gilgal.

Joshua 10:1-43

Joshua 10 - The Southern Kings Conquered

A. A miraculous victory for Israel.

1. (1-5) Adoni-Zedek and his fear of Israel.

Now it came to pass when Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, that they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty.

a. When Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai and had utterly destroyed it:

The king of Jerusalem (**Adoni-Zedek**) was rightly alarmed when he heard of the conquests of Jericho and Ai. He understood that the armies of Israel would soon come against all the cities of Canaan.

i. Especially troubling was the news that they **had utterly destroyed** both Jericho and Ai – that is, that they had brought the unique judgment of God against

the Canaanites and did not take any plunder or profit from the cities. An Israelite army fighting for the glory of God and as a unique instrument of God's judgment rightly made them afraid.

ii. Adoni-Zedek also had reason to be concerned from a strategic perspective. The previous victories across the middle of Canaan effectively separated Canaan between north and south. "Israel controlled the Benjaminite plateau, the crossroads between the hill country and the Judean wilderness. It provided access to the coastal plain and lowlands to the west via the Beth Horon pass." (Hess)

iii. "It has been conjectured that the Canaanitish kings assumed this name in imitation of that of the ancient patriarchal king of this city, Melchizedek, whose name signifies *king of righteousness*, or *my righteous king*: a supposition that is not improbable." (Clarke)

b. And how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel: In addition, the surrender and subordination of the Gibeonites caused Adoni-Zedek to be afraid. Gibeon was a **great city** and its **men were mighty** – if *they* surrendered to Israel, things were bad for Canaanites.

i. The Gibeonites did not submit to Israel out of a position of weakness; indeed, **all its men were mighty**. Yet it was because of their love and honor of the God of Israel that they submitted to perpetual service in His tabernacle.

c. They feared greatly: Fear did not make the Canaanites surrender. It made them organize and fight, and **Adoni-Zedek** became the leader of the southern Canaanite kings.

- i. The enemies of Israel **feared greatly**; but like our spiritual enemies, they did not retreat but launched even more bold attacks, as a wild animal might fight when it feels attacked.

2. (3-5) *The southern kings of Canaan assemble for an attack on Gibeon.*

Therefore Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon, saying, "Come up to me and help me, that we may attack Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel." Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, gathered together and went up, they and all their armies, and camped before Gibeon and made war against it.

a. **Therefore Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron:** Acting on his fear, Adoni-Zedek began to organize the kings of southern Canaan. Since Israel occupied the land to their north, he could not get help from the kings of northern Canaan.

- i. What Adoni-Zedek did was not unusual. In this same approximate time, "Jerusalem's leader wrote at least five letters to the Pharaoh regarding his town and its security. These letters, part of the collection known as the Armana letters, are longer and more literate than the contemporary missives of other Palestinian town leaders." (Hess)

b. **King of Jerusalem... king of Hebron... king of Jarmuth... king of Lachish... king of Eglon:** This again displays that the Canaanites were organized as city-states instead of one unified nation. It took the leadership of Adoni-Zedek to bring them together.

i. Each one of these cities – Jerusalem, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, and Hebron were important cities either for their location or for the trade routes associated with them.

ii. “Like Adoni-Zedek, the names of the four leaders can be identified with similar names from texts and peoples in and around Palestine during the same period of time that the account in Joshua purports to describe.” (Hess)

c. **That we may attack Gibeon:** Though they were afraid, they were still clever. Afraid to attack Israel directly, they attacked their subjects, the Gibeonites.

3. (6) The plea for help from Gibeon.

And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal, saying, “Do not forsake your servants; come up to us quickly, save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the mountains have gathered together against us.”

a. **Sent to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal:** Joshua and the armies of Israel were still at **Gilgal**. This was an important place for Israel’s conquest of Canaan.

- Gilgal was the place of memorial (Jos 4:20).
- Gilgal was the place of radical obedience (Jos 5:2-3).
- Gilgal was the place where reproach was removed (Jos 5:9).
- Gilgal was the place of obedience and the remembrance of salvation (Jos 5:10).
- Gilgal was the place where the manna stopped, and they began to live of what the Promised Land provided (Jos 5:11-12).

- Gilgal was the place where they met Jesus Christ in a dramatic way, as commander of the LORD's armies – and took off their sandals in reverence to holy ground (Jos 5:13-15).

b. Do not forsake your servants; come up to us quickly, save us and help us: The Gibeonites rightly looked to the people of Israel as their helpers and protectors. They were not too proud to call for help.

i. Just like the Gibeonites claimed protection on the basis of covenant, so do we because of our participation in the New Covenant. In light of our covenant with God, "*Do not forsake Your servant... save us and help us*" is a good prayer to pray.

B. The defeat of the Southern kings of Canaan.

1. (7) *Joshua and the people of Israel are faithful to their vow to the Gibeonites.*

So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor.

a. **So Joshua ascended from Gilgal:** We saw that in Joshua 9, Joshua, the leaders of Israel, and all the people of Israel knew they made a bad vow to the Gibeonites, yet they did not turn their backs on that vow.

i. This is the first example in Joshua of *counterattack* – the enemy initiating a battle against Israel. "Here for the first time Israel does not initiate the aggression but responds to an ally's appeal." (Hess)

b. **He and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor:** Joshua not only kept the vow made to the Gibeonites, but he kept it with great energy and dedication. He sent his best into this battle to defend Gibeon.

i. Allowing these Canaanite kings to wipe out the Gibeonites would have been a convenient way to get out of a vow that should not have been made, but they will have none of it.

ii. We should have the same sense of honor. Though Joshua was only bound to not kill the Gibeonites himself (Jos 9:15), he also felt obliged to fulfill the *spirit* of the vow he made to the Gibeonites.

2. (8) *God's command and promise to Joshua.*

And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you."

a. **Do not fear them:** This was a *command*. Though Joshua had reason to fear because Israel faced a confederation of **five** kings, God commanded Joshua to not fear his enemies.

b. **I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you:** The command was joined to a *promise*. Joshua could obey God's *command* to not fear because he had God's *promise* of victory.

i. Fear takes away our ability to fight God's battles. Even in the face of strong enemies, Joshua was command to not fear. For Joshua, fear was unbelief – being unwilling to believe what God promised. So it is with us today.

3. (9) *Joshua's response of faith.*

Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly, having marched all night from Gilgal.

a. **Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly:** With the assurance of God's promise (Jos 10:8), Joshua did not sit back to passively watch God work without his

participation. He went to great effort to participate with the work and will of God.

b. **Having marched all night from Gilgal:** This took hard work and initiative on Joshua's part. The march from Gilgal to Gibeon involved a climb of 3,300 feet (1,000 meters), over a distance of about 20 miles (32 kilometers). This was eight to ten hours of hard marching, all through the night.

i. God does His work, but He draws us into working with Him. Often God waits to see our initiative, our willingness to be a partner with Him, before He does what only He can do.

ii. This is *not* the idea that "God helps those who help themselves." The idea is "God wants to draw His people into partnership with Him in seeing His work done."

4. (10-11) *God sends giant hailstones to fight for Israel.*

So the LORD routed them before Israel, killed them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them along the road that goes to Beth Horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. And it happened, as they fled before Israel *and* were on the descent of Beth Horon, that the LORD cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. *There were* more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword.

a. **So the LORD routed them before Israel:** God's work, and the partnership of Joshua's work with the LORD, accomplished something great. The enemies of God were **routed**.

b. **The LORD cast down large hailstones from heaven:** The **hailstones** that killed the retreating

armies of the Canaanites were obviously miraculous. The hail itself could have been a phenomenon of nature, but their aim and timing were evidence of the hand of God.

i. "The Canaanites, who worshipped nature deities, must have thought that their own gods were aiding the Israelites." (Madvig)

ii. In *Worlds in Collision*, Immanuel Velikovsky suggested that this rain of hailstones was actually a sustained meteor show, the train of a comet. He also theorized that the passing of the comet was related to the next amazing work of God for Israel and Joshua.

c. There were more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword:

God's miraculous work was much greater than Israel's work. Yet we notice that Joshua didn't wait around for the hail to come. He did what he *could* do in partnership with God, and God did what only *God* could do.

5. (12-15) God extends the day to maximize Israel's victory.

Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel:

**"Sun, stand still over Gibeon;
And Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon."
So the sun stood still,
And the moon stopped,
Till the people had revenge
Upon their enemies.**

Is this not written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go *down* for about a whole day. And there has been no day like that, before it or after it, that the LORD heeded the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for

Israel. Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

a. **“Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.” So the sun stood still:** Seeing God’s miraculous hand in action gave Joshua the boldness to ask for an even more remarkable miracle - to keep the day going, to keep the sun from setting, so that Israel had time to accomplish a complete victory before darkness fell.

i. The sun and the moon had long stood as silent witnesses to the sin, wickedness, and demonic religion of these Canaanites. Now, under the command of God, they helped Joshua to complete this victory over the Canaanites.

b. **So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. And there has been no day like that, before it or after it:** In a completely unique miracle, God answered Joshua’s bold prayer and **the LORD fought for Israel** in a unique way during Israel’s conquest of Canaan.

i. Some wonder *how* the length of the day was extended. It could have been a slowing of the earth’s rotation; it could have been a tilting of the earth’s axis; it could have been a miracle of reflection of light; it could have been simply the presence of God manifested in light.

ii. However it was done, the result was clear. The sun seemed to stay still in the sky, and Israel was able to complete the victory.

iii. In *Worlds in Collision*, Immanuel Velikovsky suggested that the long day was caused by the near pass of a comet, that was powerful enough to tilt the axis of the earth. “The tilting of the axis could

produce the visual effect of a retrogressing or arrested sun; a greater tilting, a multiple day or night.” [385] He also noted that there are records among the ancient Americans that speak of an extraordinarily long *night* in the same approximate time.

iv. Some criticize this account, saying that obviously, since the sun *is* still, and the earth rotates around the sun, that Joshua is wrong when he says **the sun stood still**. This kind of criticism doesn’t account for our normal way of speaking. We use the terms *sunrise* and *sunset* without a second thought. In addition, more modern astronomy tells us that the sun *is* in motion; perhaps the sun did literally stand still.

v. Hundreds of years later, God used the prophet Isaiah to bring a heavy word of coming judgment to His people. In that word, God remembered Gibeon, where He had won a great victory for Israel in Joshua’s day (Isa 28:20-22). Isaiah warned the people that this miraculous strength of God would be turned *against* His people if they did not repent. As Isaiah put it, this use of God’s strength against His people is surely *His awesome work*, or as the King James Version puts it, *His strange work*.

c. Till the people had revenge upon their enemies:

Joshua did not ask God to do the fighting for him, even though God did do some of that. Joshua simply asked that God miraculously give him the *opportunity* to fight for Him.

i. Like Joshua, we often wish that time stayed still. We would do well to imitate Joshua’s *reasons* for extended time. Joshua wanted time to stay still so that:

- God would be glorified.
- God would be obeyed.
- God's work would be continued without hindrance.
- God's people would triumph.

6. (16-21) *The completion of the battle.*

But these five kings had fled and hidden themselves in a cave at Makkedah. And it was told Joshua, saying, "The five kings have been found hidden in the cave at Makkedah." So Joshua said, "Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard them. And do not stay *there* yourselves, *but* pursue your enemies, and attack their rear *guard*. Do not allow them to enter their cities, for the LORD your God has delivered them into your hand." Then it happened, while Joshua and the children of Israel made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they had finished, that those who escaped entered fortified cities. And all the people returned to the camp, to Joshua at Makkedah, in peace. No one moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.

a. **Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard them. And do not stay there yourselves, but pursue your enemies, and attack their rear guard:** Joshua would not allow anything - even the personal capture of the kings - to keep him from completing Israel's victory. The kings could be imprisoned and dealt with later.

b. **Made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter:** This repeats a significant theme throughout the Book of Joshua; that they were to conduct a unique war of judgment against the Canaanites.

c. **No one moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel:** The people of Canaan knew - beyond any doubt - that God was with Joshua and the nation of Israel.

i. By analogy and application, the church – just like Israel – should be feared in the sense that it should be a place where people know God will conquer them. They should have the idea “If I keep coming here, God is going to conquer me. I’ll have to submit my life to Him.” Too many churches present a harmless sort of God who demands no surrender from His people.

7. (22-27) The execution of the Canaanite kings.

Then Joshua said, “Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings to me from the cave.” And they did so, and brought out those five kings to him from the cave: the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, *and* the king of Eglon. So it was, when they brought out those kings to Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the captains of the men of war who went with him, “Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings.” And they drew near and put their feet on their necks. Then Joshua said to them, “Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage, for thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight.” And afterward Joshua struck them and killed them, and hanged them on five trees; and they were hanging on the trees until evening. So it was at the time of the going down of the sun *that* Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees, cast them into the cave where they had been hidden, and laid large stones against the cave’s mouth, *which remain* until this very day.

a. **Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings:** Joshua *delayed* dealing with the kings so he could finish the battle. Yet in time, he dealt with them. Joshua did not sin in the way Saul later would in failing to carry out God's judgment against Agag (1 Samuel 15).

i. The **king of Jerusalem**, Adoni-Zedek, was among these five kings. This would be the end of his reign and his life. Taken together, he is a fascinating picture or type.

- His name means, "Lord of Righteousness."
- The Pagan King of Jerusalem.
- Led a confederation of Kings.
- Fought against Joshua.
- Resisted God's occupation of the land.
- Kept with other kings in caves.

ii. The Bible tells us of a coming false messiah (Rev 13:3), who will rule over Jerusalem (2Th 2:3-4), who will lead a confederation of kings (Rev 17:12-13), fighting against Yeshua (Rev 17:14), resisting His occupation of the land (Rev 19:19), and hiding in caves (Rev 6:15-17). All in all, Adoni-Zedek is a fascinating picture of the coming Antichrist.

b. **Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings:** This was dramatic and undeniably brutal. Joshua, directed by God, wanted to give these **captains of the men of war** courage and the sense of victory in obedience to God. This said, "God has allowed you to conquer kings."

i. The idea of partnership with God in the pursuit of victory is again repeated in Jos 10:25. God promised

victory over all **your enemies *against whom you fight***.

c. **And afterward Joshua struck them and killed them, and hanged them on five trees:** By this dramatic execution, Joshua made it clear that there could be absolutely no accommodation with these Canaanite kings. By performing the execution himself, he accepted great risk. Often rulers will spare other rulers, thinking they might be on the losing side in the future. In doing this, Joshua knew that if Israel's armies were ever defeated, he would be killed.

i. After this pattern, we can allow no place in our lives to our spiritual enemies. All the ground belongs to Jesus and must be taken for Him.

ii. "Hanging *alive* seems a barbarous custom: among the Hebrews, criminals were first deprived of life; this was the debt required by *justice*: then they were hanged up, perhaps generally by the *hands*, not by the *neck*; this was done by way of *example*, to deter others from committing the crimes for which those had suffered." (Clarke)

C. Conquest of the South completed.

"The annalistic form corresponds as closely as any Ancient Near Eastern conquest account can to the recitation of what we know of as history." (Hess)

1. (28) *The fall of the Canaanite city of Makkedah.*

On that day Joshua took Makkedah, and struck it and its king with the edge of the sword. He utterly destroyed them; all the people who were in it. He let none remain. He also did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho.

2. (29-30) *The fall of the Canaanite city of Libnah.*

Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, to Libnah; and they fought against Libnah. And the LORD also delivered it and its king into the hand of Israel; he struck it and all the people who *were* in it with the edge of the sword. He let none remain in it, but did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho.

3. (31-32) The fall of the Canaanite city of Lachish.

Then Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, to Lachish; and they encamped against it and fought against it. And the LORD delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, who took it on the second day, and struck it and all the people who *were* in it with the edge of the sword, according to all that he had done to Libnah.

4. (33) The fall of the Canaanite city of Gezer.

Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua struck him and his people, until he left him none remaining.

5. (34-35) The fall of the Canaanite city of Eglon.

From Lachish Joshua passed to Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it and fought against it. They took it on that day and struck it with the edge of the sword; all the people who *were* in it he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish.

6. (36-37) The fall of the Canaanite city of Hebron.

So Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, to Hebron; and they fought against it. And they took it and struck it with the edge of the sword; its king, all its cities, and all the people who *were* in it; he left none remaining, according to all that he had

done to Eglon, but utterly destroyed it and all the people who were in it.

7. (38-39) The fall of the Canaanite city of Debir.

Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and they fought against it. And he took it and its king and all its cities; they struck them with the edge of the sword and utterly destroyed all the people who were in it. He left none remaining; as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir and its king, as he had done also to Libnah and its king.

8. (40-43) Summary of the conquest of the Southern Canaanite Kingdoms.

So Joshua conquered all the land: the mountain country and the South and the lowland and the wilderness slopes, and all their kings; he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded. And Joshua conquered them from Kadesh Barnea as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even as far as Gibeon. All these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel. Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

a. **So Joshua conquered all the land:** In a period of weeks (perhaps months) these six cities were defeated, without a single lost battle for Israel. Each battle was a test. None of them were easy, but under the leadership of Joshua, they all were victorious.

i. *This was a lot of war.* "It is eternally true that the land of full blessing is a land of intensive warfare." (Redpath)

i. God's desire is that we should enjoy the same life of victory. *But we all... are being transformed into the*

same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2Co 3:18)

b. All these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel: The victory was won **one at a time**. We often want to do everything and win every battle for God all at once. This can be Satan's strategy to set us up for a strong attack of discouragement.

i. God told Israel in Exo 23:30 (and Deu 7:22) that He would drive out the Canaanites *little by little*. Israel wasn't ready to take the land all at once, and God gave it to them in portions they *could* take, as long as they trusted and obeyed Him.

ii. As well, God knew *which* battles to fight and *when* to fight them. These were not the only Canaanite cities in the region, but they were the military strongholds. God knew what He was doing in selecting which particular battles to fight, and when they needed to be fought.

c. The Lord GOD of Israel fought for Israel: This was obviously the most important factor. This illustrates the key factor in our battle against our own spiritual enemies. We can only win as we see the LORD fighting on our behalf. He provides the victory and we walk in it.

i. We come to realize that the victory was won at the cross, and now we need to live in light of that victory. Col 2:15 speaks to this idea: *Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it* [the cross]. It is in this sense that we are *more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (Rom 8:37)*

ii. To be disappointed in yourself is to have trusted in yourself. It shows that we tried to fight the battle in

our own resources, not the LORD's victory.

d. Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal: Israel's victories always came from Gilgal. This was the place of total faith, commitment and fellowship with God, and the place where Israel had been conquered by God.

Conquests in Northern Canaan

Jos 11:1 When the news of Israel's victories reached King Jabin of Hazor, he sent word to King Jobab of Madon, to the kings of Shimron and Achshaph,

Jos 11:2 and to the kings in the hill country in the north, in the Jordan Valley south of Lake Galilee, in the foothills, and on the coast near Dor.

Jos 11:3 He also sent word to the Canaanites on both sides of the Jordan, to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites in the hill country, as well as to the Hivites who lived at the foot of Mount Hermon in the land of Mizpah.

Jos 11:4 They came with all their soldiers—an army with as many men as there are grains of sand on the seashore. They also had many horses and chariots.

Jos 11:5 All of these kings joined forces and came together and set up camp at Merom Brook to fight against Israel.

Jos 11:6 The LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them. By this time tomorrow I will have killed all of them for Israel. You are to cripple their horses and burn their chariots."

Jos 11:7 So Joshua and all his men attacked them by surprise at Merom Brook.

Jos 11:8 The LORD gave the Israelites victory over them; the Israelites attacked and pursued them as far north as Misrephoth Maim and Sidon, and as far east as the valley of

Mizpah. The fight continued until none of the enemy was left alive.

Jos 11:9 Joshua did to them what the LORD had commanded: he crippled their horses and burned their chariots.

Jos 11:10 Joshua then turned back, captured Hazor and killed its king. (At that time Hazor was the most powerful of all those kingdoms.)

Jos 11:11 They put everyone there to death; no one was left alive, and the city was burned.

Jos 11:12 Joshua captured all these cities and their kings, putting everyone to death, just as Moses, the LORD's servant, had commanded.

Jos 11:13 However, the Israelites did not burn any of the cities built on mounds, except Hazor, which Joshua did burn.

Jos 11:14 The people of Israel took all the valuables and livestock from these cities and kept them for themselves. But they put every person to death; no one was left alive.

Jos 11:15 The LORD had given his commands to his servant Moses, Moses had given them to Joshua, and Joshua obeyed them. He did everything that the LORD had commanded Moses.

Jos 11:16 Joshua captured all the land—the hill country and foothills, both north and south, all the area of Goshen and the dry country south of it, as well as the Jordan Valley.

Jos 11:17 (17-18) The territory extended from Mount Halak in the south near Edom, as far as Baalgad in the north, in the valley of Lebanon south of Mount Hermon. Joshua was at war with the kings of this territory for a long time, but he captured them all and put them to death.

Jos 11:19 The only city that made peace with the people of Israel was Gibeon, where some of the Hivites lived. All the

others were conquered in battle.

Jos 11:20 The LORD had made them determined to fight the Israelites, so that they would be condemned to total destruction and all be killed without mercy. This was what the LORD had commanded Moses.

Jos 11:21 At this time Joshua went and destroyed the race of giants called the Anakim who lived in the hill country—in Hebron, Debir, Anab, and in all the hill country of Judah and Israel. Joshua completely destroyed them and their cities.

Jos 11:22 None of the Anakim were left in the land of Israel; a few, however, were left in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod.

Jos 11:23 Joshua captured the whole land, as the LORD had commanded Moses. Joshua gave it to the Israelites as their own and divided it into portions, one for each tribe. So the people rested from war.

Joshua 11:1-23

Joshua 11 - The Northern Canaanite Armies Defeated

A. The defeat of the northern kings.

1. (1-5) The northern kings of Canaan gather against Israel.

And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor heard *these things*, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph, and to the kings who *were* from the north, in the mountains, in the plain south of Chinneroth, in the lowland, and in the heights of Dor on the west, to the Canaanites in the east and in the west, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite in the mountains, and the Hivite below Hermon in the land of Mizpah. So they went out, they and all their armies with them, as many people as the sand that *is* on the seashore in multitude, with very many horses and chariots. And

when all these kings had met together, they came and camped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel.

a. And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor heard these things: After hearing of Israel's total conquest of the south, the northern kings came together to defeat Israel. The huge army assembled together reflects an attitude that they believe they must stop Israel now or never.

i. All this was prompted by what the northern kings **heard** regarding Israel's success and victory. Walking in victory means that we become targets - when we are revived, so is the devil.

b. They went out, they and all their armies with them: Two things indicate that now Israel faced challenges they had never faced before. First, the size of the enemy army: **as many people as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude.** Second, the technological superiority of the Canaanites: **with very many horses and chariots.**

i. The challenges brought to Israel seem to increase at each step, from Jericho, to Ai, to the battle with the southern kings, now to this battle.

ii. We often find that the challenges facing us in our Christian life increase at each step. God uses each previous victory as a springboard for what we face in the future.

2. (6) God's encouragement to Joshua.

But the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire."

a. **Tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel:** This attack was new, and more severe than previous challenges. Joshua needed a fresh confirmation of God's promise for his life, and the LORD was faithful to bring it.

b. **Do not be afraid because of them:** This means that fear was an issue for Joshua and the people of Israel. God has a reason for everything He does, and He would not have assured them *do not be afraid* unless there was a reason for the encouragement.

3. (7-9) *Joshua attacks the northern armies, and they are defeated.*

So Joshua and all the people of war with him came against them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and they attacked them. And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, who defeated them and chased them to Greater Sidon, to the Brook Misrephoth, and to the Valley of Mizpah eastward; they attacked them until they left none of them remaining. So Joshua did to them as the LORD had told him: he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

a. **So Joshua and all the people of war with him came against them suddenly:** Joshua fought with *boldness* and *strategy*, he surprised them with an unexpected ambush.

b. **So Joshua did to them as the LORD had told him:** Joshua fought with *obedience*, doing exactly what the LORD told them to do, even destroying the Canaanite "weapons" (the horses and the chariots) instead of taking them for his own army.

i. Here is a lesson in the matter of "taking the devil's tools." Many Christians do not hesitate to use the

“horses and chariots” of their spiritual enemy. Perhaps they should believe that God may want them to fight the battle on a different level - a level of complete trust in Him.

c. They attacked them until they left none of them remaining: Joshua fought with *passion* and *commitment*; he did not let up until he had accomplished as much as he could.

4. (10-15) The defeat of Hazor, the head of the northern Canaanite kingdoms.

Joshua turned back at that time and took Hazor, and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor was formerly the head of all those kingdoms. And they struck all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying *them*. There was none left breathing. Then he burned Hazor with fire. So all the cities of those kings, and all their kings, Joshua took and struck with the edge of the sword. He utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded. But *as for* the cities that stood on their mounds, Israel burned none of them, except Hazor only, *which* Joshua burned. And all the spoil of these cities and the livestock, the children of Israel took as booty for themselves; but they struck every man with the edge of the sword until they had destroyed them, and they left none breathing. As the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

a. They struck all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them. There was none left breathing: The staggering completeness of the destruction (especially in human

terms) shows us the *completeness* of God's judgment, Israel's obedience, and the depravity of the Canaanites.

B. Israel is secure in Canaan.

1. (16-20) Complete victory over Canaan, over north and south.

Thus Joshua took all this land: the mountain country, all the South, all the land of Goshen, the lowland, and the Jordan plain; the mountains of Israel and its lowlands, from Mount Halak and the ascent to Seir, even as far as Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He captured all their kings, and struck them down and killed them. Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. All *the others* they took in battle. For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, *and* that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

a. For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them: We are told that in part, this judgment on the Canaanites was accomplished when God did **harden their hearts** against Israel. The hardening of men's hearts is when God gives man up to the sin that is in his heart (Rom 1:24-28).

b. Just as the LORD had commanded Moses: We need not think that God poured out some particular judgment upon the Canaanites. He dealt with their hearts the same way He deals with all men's hearts, but God's grace either hardens the heart or it softens it.

2. (21-22) The Anakim are defeated.

And at that time Joshua came and cut off the Anakim from the mountains: from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. None of the Anakim were left in the land of the children of Israel; they remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod.

a. At that time Joshua came and cut off the Anakim from the mountains: It was a fear of the **Anakim** - this tribe of exceptionally large and strong people - that had made Israel too afraid to enter the land some forty years ago (Num 13:27-33).

b. None of the Anakim were left in the land of the children of Israel: Here, the foes of 40 years ago fall. They were no match for an army that was blessed and directed by God.

i. Significantly, Israel faced the Anakim *last*, only after God had trained them in battle and in working with Him through the months of conquest.

ii. When Israel refused to enter Canaan out of a fear of the Anakim, they did not realize that God would so guide events that they would face this most difficult challenge *last*. God knows how to manage the battles in our life.

iii. And we must *allow* God to manage those battles. All too often we are convinced that we must go out and fight the Anakim *first*, when God would have us face them *last*.

c. They remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod: The Anakim remained only in these coastal cities occupied by the Philistines. The giant Goliath comes from the city of Gath some five hundred years later (1Sa 17:4).

3. (23) *Complete victory, and the land rests from war.*

So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had said to Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Then the land rested from war.

a. **So Joshua took the whole land:** This brings us to another section of the book of Joshua. The power of the Canaanite kings within the land has been crushed, and in this sense, **Joshua took the whole land**. Yet, not every small town and village had been conquered and occupied. That was up to each individual tribe to do in the land that was apportioned to them.

b. **Then the land rested from war:** The end of this phase of conquest was a *greater* invitation to the cooperation of the tribes with God.

i. "Much territory was yet to be possessed, but it was left to each tribe to possess what potentially it had received through the conquest of the whole people in which it had taken part. Each tribe was to apply individually the lessons it had learned in united war if it was to possess its inheritance. That the tribes failed to do so was not a reflection on the power of God, but on the failure to take for themselves what Joshua had given and allotted to each one of them." (Redpath)

ii. In the same sense, Jesus has already defeated the enemy and conquered the land, but He also calls us into battle to gain what is ours.

Kings Defeated by Moses

Jos 12:1 The people of Israel had already conquered and occupied the land east of the Jordan, from the Arnon Valley up the Jordan Valley and as far north as Mount Hermon. They defeated two kings.

Jos 12:2 One was Sihon, the Amorite king who ruled at Heshbon. His kingdom included half of Gilead: from Aroer (on the edge of the Arnon Valley) and from the city in the middle of that valley, as far as the Jabbok River, the border of Ammon;

Jos 12:3 it included the Jordan Valley from Lake Galilee south to Beth Jeshimoth (east of the Dead Sea) and on toward the foot of Mount Pisgah.

Jos 12:4 They also defeated King Og of Bashan, who was one of the last of the Rephaim; he ruled at Ashtaroth and Edrei.

Jos 12:5 His kingdom included Mount Hermon, Salecah, and all of Bashan as far as the boundaries of Geshur and Maacah, as well as half of Gilead, as far as the territory of King Sihon of Heshbon.

Jos 12:6 These two kings were defeated by Moses and the people of Israel. Moses, the LORD's servant, gave their land to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and to half the tribe of Manasseh, to be their possession.

Kings Defeated by Joshua

Jos 12:7 Joshua and the people of Israel defeated all the kings in the territory west of the Jordan, from Baalgad in the valley of Lebanon to Mount Halak in the south near Edom. Joshua divided this land among the tribes and gave it to them as a permanent possession.

Jos 12:8 This portion included the hill country, the western foothills, the Jordan Valley and its foothills, the eastern slopes, and the dry country in the south. This land had been the home of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Jos 12:9 The people of Israel defeated the kings of the following cities: Jericho, Ai (near Bethel),

Jos 12:10 Jerusalem, Hebron,

Jos 12:11 Jarmuth, Lachish,
Jos 12:12 Eglon, Gezer,
Jos 12:13 Debir, Geder,
Jos 12:14 Hormah, Arad,
Jos 12:15 Libnah, Adullam,
Jos 12:16 Makkedah, Bethel,
Jos 12:17 Tappuah, Hephher,
Jos 12:18 Aphek, Lasharon,
Jos 12:19 Madon, Hazor,
Jos 12:20 Shimron Meron, Achshaph,

Jos 12:21 Taanach, Megiddo,
Jos 12:22 Kedesh, Jokneam (in Carmel),
Jos 12:23 Dor (on the coast), Goiim (in Galilee),
Jos 12:24 and Tirzah—thirty-one kings in all.

Joshua 12:1-24

Joshua 12 - List of the Conquered Kings

A. Kings defeated by Moses.

1. (1) Introduction: kings conquered by Israel under the leadership of Moses.

These *are* the kings of the land whom the children of Israel defeated, and whose land they possessed on the other side of the Jordan toward the rising of the sun, from the River Arnon to Mount Hermon, and all the eastern Jordan plain:

a. **These are the kings of the land whom the children of Israel defeated:** The land of these kings comprised Israel's land on the eastern side of the Jordan river, **on the other side of the Jordan toward the rising of the sun.**

b. **These are the kings:** This list only seems tedious to us because we do not live in the land. For those who received their inheritance there, these were essential matters that touched everyday life, answering the question: "What land belongs to Israel?"

2. (2-3) The defeat of Sihon, king of the Amorites and his land that Israel possessed.

One king was Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon and ruled half of Gilead, from Aroer, which is on the bank of the River Arnon, from the middle of that river, even as far as the River Jabbok, which is the border of the Ammonites, and the

eastern Jordan plain from the Sea of Chinneroth as far as the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea), the road to Beth Jeshimoth, and southward below the slopes of Pisgah.

3. (4-5) The defeat of Og, king of Bashan, and his land that Israel possessed.

The other king was Og king of Bashan and his territory, who was of the remnant of the giants, who dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei, and reigned over Mount Hermon, over Salcah, over all Bashan, as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maachathites, and over half of Gilead to the border of Sihon king of Heshbon.

4. (6) The eastern lands are deeded to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

These Moses the servant of the LORD and the children of Israel had conquered; and Moses the servant of the LORD had given it as a possession to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

a. **Half the tribe of Manasseh:** Half of the tribe of Manasseh lived east of the Jordan River, and half of the tribe lived west of the Jordan River.

B. Kings defeated by Joshua.

1. (7-8) A broad description of the lands and Canaanite nations conquered by Israel under the leadership of Joshua.

And these are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel conquered on this side of the Jordan, on the west, from Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon as far as Mount Halak and the ascent to Seir, which Joshua gave to the tribes of Israel as a possession according to their divisions, in the mountain country, in the lowlands, in the *Jordan* plain, in the slopes, in the wilderness, and in the

South; the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites:

a. **These are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel conquered on this side of the Jordan:** Again, this only seems tedious to us because it is not our land. If it were our land, we would read each line with great interest.

2. (9-24) *A specific recounting of the 31 kings conquered by Joshua.*

The king of Jericho, one; the king of Ai, which is beside Bethel, one; the king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one; the king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one; the king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one; the king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one; the king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one; the king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one; the king of Makkedah, one; the king of Bethel, one; the king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hephher, one; the king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one; the king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one; the king of Shimron Meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one; the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one; the king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam in Carmel, one; the king of Dor in the heights of Dor, one; the king of the people of Gilgal, one; the king of Tirzah, one; all the kings, thirty-one.

a. **The king of Jericho:** These descriptions are also important because they make it clear that these things happened in real time, and in real space. These are not fairy tales that begin with "once upon a time," this is history that begins with specific places and people and rulers.

b. **All the kings, thirty-one:** As well, it was a way that Israel could forever remember the great things God had

done for them. "Sometimes in the course of human experience it is good to sit down and reflect on what has been conquered by the grace of God." (Redpath)

c. **All the kings:** With all these kings conquered - with every one of these "principalities and powers" over the land defeated - there is no doubt that the land belongs to Israel, but the individual tribes still have much to possess for their own.

Land Still to Be Conquered

Jos 13:1 Joshua was now very old. The LORD said to him, "You are very old, but there is still much land to be taken:

Jos 13:2 all the territory of Philistia and Geshur,

Jos 13:3 as well as all the territory of the Avvim to the south. (The land from the stream Shihor, at the Egyptian border, as far north as the border of Ekron was considered Canaanite; the kings of the Philistines lived at Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron.)

Jos 13:4 There is still all the Canaanite country, and Mearah (which belonged to the Sidonians), as far as Aphek, at the Amorite border;

Jos 13:5 the land of the Gebalites; all of Lebanon to the east, from Baalgad, which is south of Mount Hermon, to Hamath Pass.

Jos 13:6 This includes all the territory of the Sidonians, who live in the hill country between the Lebanon Mountains and Misrephoth Maim. I will drive all these peoples out as the people of Israel advance. You must divide the land among the Israelites, just as I have commanded you to do.

Jos 13:7 Now then, divide this land among the other nine tribes and half of the tribe of Manasseh, for them to possess as their own."

The Inheritance East of the Jordan

Jos 13:8 The tribes of Reuben and Gad and the other half of the tribe of Manasseh had already received the land that Moses, the LORD's servant, had given them; it was on the east side of the Jordan River.

Jos 13:9 Their territory extended to Aroer (on the edge of the Arnon Valley) and the city in the middle of that valley and included all of the plateau from Medeba to Dibon.

Jos 13:10 It went as far as the border of Ammon and included all the cities that had been ruled by the Amorite king Sihon, who had ruled at Heshbon.

Jos 13:11 It included Gilead, the regions of Geshur and Maacah, all of Mount Hermon, and all of Bashan as far as Salekah.

Jos 13:12 It included the kingdom of Og, the last of the Rephaim, who had ruled at Ashtaroth and Edrei. Moses had defeated these people and driven them out.

Jos 13:13 However, the Israelites did not drive out the people of Geshur and Maacah; they still live in Israel.

Jos 13:14 Moses had given no land to the tribe of Levi. As the LORD had told Moses, they were to receive as their possession a share of the sacrifices burned on the altar to the LORD God of Israel.

Jos 13:15 Moses had given a part of the land to the families of the tribe of Reuben as their possession.

Jos 13:16 Their territory extended to Aroer (on the edge of the Arnon Valley) and the city in the middle of that valley and included all the plateau around Medeba.

Jos 13:17 It included Heshbon and all the cities on the plateau: Dibon, Bamoth Baal, Beth Baalmeon,

Jos 13:18 Jahaz, Kedemoth, Mephaath,

Jos 13:19 Kiriathaim, Sibmah, Zereth Shagar on the hill in the valley,

Jos 13:20 Bethpeor, the slopes of Mount Pisgah, and Beth Jeshimoth.

Jos 13:21 It included all the cities of the plateau and the whole kingdom of the Amorite king Sihon, who had ruled at Heshbon. Moses defeated him, as well as the rulers of Midian: Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba. All of them had ruled the land for King Sihon.

Jos 13:22 Among those whom the people of Israel killed was the fortune teller Balaam son of Beor.

Jos 13:23 The Jordan was the western border of the tribe of Reuben. These were the cities and towns given to the families of the tribe of Reuben as their possession.

Jos 13:24 Moses had also given a part of the land to the families of the tribe of Gad as their possession.

Jos 13:25 Their territory included Jazer and all the cities of Gilead, half the land of Ammon as far as Aroer, which is east of Rabbah;

Jos 13:26 their land extended from Heshbon to Ramath Mizpeh and Betonim, from Mahanaim to the border of Lodebar.

Jos 13:27 In the Jordan Valley it included Beth Haram, Bethnimrah, Sukkoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of King Sihon of Heshbon. Their western border was the Jordan River as far north as Lake Galilee.

Jos 13:28 These were the cities and towns given to the families of the tribe of Gad as their possession.

Jos 13:29 Moses had given a part of the land to the families of half the tribe of Manasseh as their possession.

Jos 13:30 Their territory extended to Mahanaim and included all of Bashan—the whole kingdom of Og, the king of Bashan, as well as all sixty of the villages of Jair in Bashan.

Jos 13:31 It included half of Gilead, as well as Ashtaroth and Edrei, the capital cities of Og's kingdom in Bashan. All this was given to half the families descended from Machir son of Manasseh.

Jos 13:32 This is how Moses divided the land east of Jericho and the Jordan when he was in the plains of Moab.

Jos 13:33 But Moses did not assign any land to the tribe of Levi. He told them that their possession was to be a share of the offerings to the LORD God of Israel.

Joshua 13:1-33

Joshua 13 - The Remaining Land; Allotments East of the Jordan

A. God's command to Joshua regarding the land remaining to be conquered.

1. (1) God speaks to an old Joshua about the land remaining to be possessed.

Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the LORD said to him: "You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed."

a. **You are old:** Even while acknowledging Joshua's advanced years, God still tells him about a job that needs to be done. No matter how much we have done in our Christian lives, there still remains much to do.

b. **There remains very much land yet to be possessed:** While there is still much to do, there can be no satisfaction with a partial inheritance - God wants us to keep pressing on.

c. **Yet to be possessed:** What the land was to Israel, Jesus is to us. We are to possess all of Him, and to keep pressing on to have all of Jesus.

i. How much of Jesus do you have? How much of the Bible do you possess as yours? Do you walk in the blessing of leading others to Jesus Christ? Of

answered prayer? Of meeting the needs of others in God's family?

2. (2-6a) *The land that remains to be occupied is described.*

This is the land that yet remains: all the territory of the Philistines and all *that of* the Geshurites, from Sihor, which *is* east of Egypt, as far as the border of Ekron northward (*which* is counted as Canaanite); the five lords of the Philistines; the Gazites, the Ashdodites, the Ashkelonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites; from the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians as far as Aphek, to the border of the Amorites; the land of the Gebalites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrise, from Baal Gad below Mount Hermon as far as the entrance to Hamath; all the inhabitants of the mountains from Lebanon as far as the Brook Misrephoth, *and* all the Sidonians;

3. (6b-7) *God's method for possessing the land is described.*

Them I will drive out from before the children of Israel; only divide it by lot to Israel as an inheritance, as I have commanded you. Now therefore, divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh.

a. **Them I will drive out from before the children of Israel:** God promised **I will drive [them] out from before the children of Israel**, but He intended that each tribe trust God for this in the portion of land divided to them by lot.

b. **Divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh:** Each tribe was responsible to possess their own land completely. God is high on the concept of personal responsibility and initiative.

i. Not only because that is how things get done, but also because that is how people are blessed in service. We are blessed by personally taking responsibility and initiative in trusting God to do what He has called them to do.

B. Land allotments east of the Jordan.

1. (8-13) The land to be divided on the east side of the Jordan river.

With the other half tribe the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance, which Moses had given them, beyond the Jordan eastward, as Moses the servant of the LORD had given them: from Aroer which *is* on the bank of the River Arnon, and the town that *is* in the midst of the ravine, and all the plain of Medeba as far as Dibon; all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, as far as the border of the children of Ammon; Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites and Maachathites, all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan as far as Salcah; all the kingdom of Og in Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and Edrei, who remained of the remnant of the giants; for Moses had defeated and cast out these. Nevertheless the children of Israel did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maachathites, but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day.

a. **With the other half tribe the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance:** This passage describes the portion of land divided among Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. It was the land of king Sihon of the Amorites and king Og of Bashan.

b. **Nevertheless the children of Israel did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maachathites:** Only two small tribes of peoples were not replaced by the Jewish

tribes settling on the east side of the Jordan: the **Geshurites** and the **Maachathites**.

i. David later married a princess from Geshur, and his son Absalom was born of her (2Sa 3:3). Absalom returned to Geshur and used it as a place to plot against his father David (2Sa 13:37-38; 2Sa 14:23; 2Sa 14:32).

ii. The Maachathites may have come from the Maachah mentioned in Gen 22:24, who was a nephew of Abraham. Later, when Sheba rebelled against David, he fled and may have taken refuge in one of the cities of the Maachathites (2Sa 20:14-15).

2. (14) The unique situation of the tribe of Levi.

Only to the tribe of Levi he had given no inheritance; the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance, as He said to them.

a. **Only to the tribe of Levi he had given no inheritance:** Levi, the priestly tribe, was to receive no "province" such as the other tribes received; they would be given certain cities (Joshua 20-21).

b. **The sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance:** Instead, the Levites had as their inheritance the offerings that Israel would bring to the LORD. These were their "financial security" in Israel.

3. (15-23) The portion of Reuben's land.

And Moses had given to the tribe of the children of Reuben *an inheritance* according to their families. Their territory was from Aroer, which *is* on the bank of the River Arnon, and the city that *is* in the midst of the ravine, and all the plain by Medeba; Heshbon and all its cities that *are* in the plain: Dibon, Bamoth Baal, Beth Baal Meon, Jahaza, Kedemoth, Mephaath, Kirjathaim, Sibmah, Zereth Shagar on the mountain of

the valley, Beth Peor, the slopes of Pisgah, and Beth Jeshimoth; all the cities of the plain and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses had struck with the princes of Midian: Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, who were princes of Sihon dwelling in the country. The children of Israel also killed with the sword Balaam the son of Beor, the soothsayer, among those who were killed by them. And the border of the children of Reuben was the bank of the Jordan. This was the inheritance of the children of Reuben according to their families, the cities and their villages.

4. (24-28) The portion of Gad's land.

Moses also had given *an inheritance* to the tribe of Gad, to the children of Gad according to their families. Their territory was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the Ammonites as far as Aroer, which is before Rabbah, and from Heshbon to Ramath Mizpah and Betonim, and from Mahanaim to the border of Debir, and in the valley Beth Haram, Beth Nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, with the Jordan as *its* border, as far as the edge of the Sea of Chinnereth, on the other side of the Jordan eastward. This is the inheritance of the children of Gad according to their families, the cities and their villages.

5. (29-32) The portion of half the tribe of Manasseh's land.

Moses also had given *an inheritance* to half the tribe of Manasseh; it was for half the tribe of the children of Manasseh according to their families: Their territory was from Mahanaim, all Bashan, all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair which are in Bashan, sixty cities; half of Gilead, and Ashtaroth and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og

in Bashan, were for the children of Machir the son of Manasseh, for half of the children of Machir according to their families. These *are the areas* which Moses had distributed as an inheritance in the plains of Moab on the other side of the Jordan, by Jericho eastward.

6. (33) More on the inheritance of the Levites.

But to the tribe of Levi Moses had given no inheritance; the LORD God of Israel was their inheritance, as He had said to them.

a. The LORD God of Israel was their inheritance, as He had said to them: In Jos 13:14, we are told that the Levites had no land for an inheritance, but instead had the sacrifices Israel brought to God. They also received a greater inheritance than that: God Himself.

b. The LORD God of Israel was their inheritance: In this sense, if there is any tribe that Christians are spiritually connected to, it is the tribe of Levi. We also are called priests (1Pe 2:5) and have a special inheritance in God (Eph 1:11, Col 1:12, and 1Pe 1:4).

c. As He said to them: Many of us are dissatisfied with our place before God. We wish He would have given us something different, and we can even get bitter towards God about this. The primary answer to this is to see ourselves as priests, and to understand that our real inheritance is God Himself.

The Inheritance West of the Jordan

Jos 14:1 What follows is an account of how the land of Canaan west of the Jordan was divided among the people of Israel. Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the leaders of the families of the Israelite tribes divided it among the population.

Jos 14:2 As the LORD had commanded Moses, the territories of the nine and one-half tribes west of the Jordan were determined by drawing lots.

Jos 14:3 (3-4) Moses had already assigned the land east of the Jordan to the other two and one-half tribes. (The descendants of Joseph were divided into two tribes: Manasseh and Ephraim.) However, Moses gave the Levites no portion of the territory. Instead, they received cities to live in, with fields for their cattle and flocks.

Jos 14:5 The people of Israel divided the land as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Caleb's Request and Inheritance

Jos 14:6 One day some people from the tribe of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal. One of them, Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, said to him, "You know what the LORD said in Kadesh Barnea about you and me to Moses, the man of God.

Jos 14:7 I was forty years old when the LORD's servant Moses sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out this land. I brought an honest report back to him.

Jos 14:8 The men who went with me, however, made our people afraid. But I faithfully obeyed the LORD my God.

Jos 14:9 Because I did, Moses promised me that my children and I would certainly receive as our possession the land which I walked over.

Jos 14:10 But now, look. It has been forty-five years since the LORD said that to Moses. That was when Israel was going through the desert, and the LORD, as he promised, has kept me alive ever since. Look at me! I am eighty-five years old

Jos 14:11 and am just as strong today as I was when Moses sent me out. I am still strong enough for war or for anything else.

Jos 14:12 Now then, give me the hill country that the LORD promised me on that day when my men and I reported. We told you then that the race of giants called the Anakim were there in large walled cities. Maybe the LORD will be with me, and I will drive them out, just as the LORD said."

Jos 14:13 Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him the city of Hebron as his possession.

Jos 14:14 Hebron still belongs to the descendants of Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, because he faithfully obeyed the LORD, the God of Israel.

Jos 14:15 Before this, Hebron was called the city of Arba. (Arba had been the greatest of the Anakim.) There was now peace in the land.

Joshua 14:1-15

Joshua 14 - The Western Land to be Divided

A. Preparation for the division of the land.

1. (1-2) The distribution of the land on the western side of the Jordan river.

These *are the areas* which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel distributed as an inheritance to them. Their inheritance *was* by lot, as the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes and the half-tribe.

a. Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel distributed as an inheritance to them: In this process, Joshua, Eleazar and representatives from each tribe came together to

supervise the casting of lots, which was directed by the LORD.

2. (3-5) An explanation of the nine and one-half tribes who received their inheritance on the west side of the Jordan.

For Moses had given the inheritance of the two tribes and the half-tribe on the other side of the Jordan; but to the Levites he had given no inheritance among them. For the children of Joseph were two tribes: Manasseh and Ephraim. And they gave no part to the Levites in the land, except cities to dwell *in*, with their common-lands for their livestock and their property. As the LORD had commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did; and they divided the land.

a. **For the children of Joseph were two tribes:** We commonly think and speak of the “twelve tribes of Israel” but actually there were thirteen, because although there were twelve sons of Jacob (Israel), the descendants of one of his sons, Joseph, divided into **two tribes (Manasseh and Ephraim)**.

b. **They divided the land:** This explains why you can have two and one-half tribes on the east side of the Jordan river, nine and one-half tribes on the west side of the Jordan river, and one tribe with no province as their inheritance.

B. Caleb’s inheritance.

1. (6-9) Caleb remembers Moses’ promise.

Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him: “You know the word which the LORD said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as *it*

was in my heart. Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the LORD my God. So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.'"

a. **Caleb the son of Jephunneh:** Caleb, from the tribe of Judah, was one of the twelve spies who scouted out the land of Canaan some forty-five years before when Israel first was on the threshold of the Promised Land (Num 13:1-25).

b. **But I wholly followed the LORD my God:** Caleb was one of the only two spies to come back with a good report, a report of faith, believing that God had given Israel the land and would enable them to conquer it (Num 13:26 to Num 14:9). The other ten spies believed that Israel would be destroyed in the attempt to take Canaan, and Israel believed the ten doubting spies.

i. The other faithful spy was none other than Joshua. The ten faithless spies measured the giants against their own strength, but Joshua and Caleb measured the giants against God's strength.

ii. This was the cause of Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness; God would not allow that generation of unbelief to enter in, so He waited for them to die in the desert (Num 14:26-38). The only ones of age at the time of the rejection who actually entered the Promised Land were be Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful spies.

iii. So, it is fitting as Judah is the first tribe to receive its allotment on the west side of the Jordan, that Caleb be the first among the people of Judah to receive his inheritance.

c. **So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever:** Caleb calls Joshua back to the promise Moses made in Deu 1:35-36. When Caleb says **I wholly followed the LORD my God**, he isn't being proud - he is just quoting what Moses had said about him.

i. We should imitate Caleb's boldness in asking for what God promised him. We may find it hard to believe, but God appreciates this kind of boldness.

d. **Because you have wholly followed the LORD my God:** Because Caleb repeats this phrase twice, we can assume it made a significant impression on him - and fittingly so, because it is a great and important thing to **wholly** follow the LORD.

i. We recognize that most successful people are those who have wholly given themselves over to something. Will we **wholly** give ourselves over to following the LORD?

2. (10-15) *Caleb seizes God's promise.*

"And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old. As yet I *am as* strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength *was* then, so now *is* my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim *were* there, and *that* the cities *were* great *and* fortified. It may be that the LORD *will be* with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said." And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh

as an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel. And the name of Hebron formerly was Kirjath Arba (*Arba* was the greatest man among the Anakim). Then the land had rest from war.

a. **Here I am this day, eighty-five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me:** Though he is advanced in age, his strength is undiminished. At eighty-five he was out leading the fight, and not against just any foe, but against the **Anakim**.

i. This is how God wants us to be in our spiritual life as we advance in years: growing older, but never weaker in Jesus.

b. **Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there:** In fact, Caleb *wants* the fight. He could have asked for an easy place, but he knows that these foes must be faced and figures that he may as well be the one to do it. He doesn't leave the work to someone else, though he could have, especially at his age.

c. **Because he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel:** What if *all* of Israel had the heart of Caleb? What if *no one* in Israel had the heart of Caleb? Again, Caleb's secret is clear: **he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel**. There was a total commitment in Caleb's life.

The Allotment for Judah

Jos 15:1 The families of the tribe of Judah received a part of the land described as follows: The land reached south to the southernmost point of the wilderness of Zin, at the border of Edom.

Jos 15:2 This southern border ran from the south end of the Dead Sea,

Jos 15:3 went southward from the Akrabbim Pass and on to Zin. It ran south of Kadesh Barnea, past Hezron and up to Addar, turned toward Karka,

Jos 15:4 went on to Azmon, and followed the stream on the border of Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea, where the border ended. That was the southern border of Judah.

Jos 15:5 The eastern border was the Dead Sea, all the way up to the inlet where the Jordan empties into it. The northern border began there,

Jos 15:6 extended up to Beth Hoglah, and went north of the ridge overlooking the Jordan Valley. Then it went up to the Stone of Bohan (Bohan was a son of Reuben),

Jos 15:7 from Trouble Valley up to Debir, and then turned north toward Gilgal, which faces Adummim Pass on the south side of the valley. It then went on to the springs of Enshemesh, out to Enrogel,

Jos 15:8 and up through Hinnom Valley on the south side of the hill where the Jebusite city of Jerusalem was located. The border then proceeded up to the top of the hill on the west side of Hinnom Valley, at the northern end of Rephaim Valley.

Jos 15:9 From there it went to the Springs of Nephtoah and out to the cities near Mount Ephron. There it turned toward Baalah (or Kiriath Jearim),

Jos 15:10 where it circled west of Baalah toward the hill country of Edom, went on the north side of Mount Jearim (or Chesalon), down to Beth Shemesh, and on past Timnah.

Jos 15:11 The border then went out to the hill north of Ekron, turned toward Shikkeron, past Mount Baalah, and on to Jamnia. It ended at the Mediterranean Sea,

Jos 15:12 which formed the western border. Within these borders lived the people of the families of Judah.

Jos 15:13 As the LORD commanded Joshua, part of the territory of Judah was given to Caleb son of Jephunneh, from the tribe of Judah. He received Hebron, the city belonging to Arba, father of Anak.

Jos 15:14 Caleb drove the descendants of Anak out of the city—the clans of Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai.

Jos 15:15 From there he went to attack the people living in Debir. (This city used to be called Kiriath Sepher.)

Jos 15:16 Caleb said, "I will give my daughter Achsah in marriage to the man who succeeds in capturing Kiriath Sepher."

Jos 15:17 Othniel, the son of Caleb's brother Kenaz, captured the city, so Caleb gave him his daughter Achsah in marriage.

Jos 15:18 On the wedding day Othniel urged her to ask her father for a field. She got down from her donkey, and Caleb asked her what she wanted.

Jos 15:19 She answered, "I want some water holes. The land you have given me is in the dry country." So Caleb gave her the upper and lower springs.

Jos 15:20 This is the land that the families of the tribe of Judah received as their possession.

Jos 15:21 The cities farthest south that belonged to them, those that were near the border of Edom, were Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur,

Jos 15:22 Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah,

Jos 15:23 Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan,

Jos 15:24 Ziph, Telem, Bealoth,

Jos 15:25 Hazor Hadattah, Kerioth Hezron (or Hazor),

Jos 15:26 Amam, Shema, Moladah,

Jos 15:27 Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Bethpelet,

Jos 15:28 Hazar Shual, Beersheba, Biziothiah,
Jos 15:29 Baalah, Iim, Ezem,
Jos 15:30 Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah,
Jos 15:31 Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah,
Jos 15:32 Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon: twenty-nine cities in all, along with the towns around them.
Jos 15:33 The cities in the foothills were Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah,
Jos 15:34 Zanoah, Engannim, Tappuah, Enam,
Jos 15:35 Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah,
Jos 15:36 Shaaraim, Adithaim, Gederah, and Gederothaim: fourteen cities, along with the towns around them.
Jos 15:37 There were also Zenan, Hadashah, Migdalgad,
Jos 15:38 Dilean, Mizpah, Joktheel,
Jos 15:39 Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon,
Jos 15:40 Cabbon, Lahmam, Chitlish,
Jos 15:41 Gederoth, Bethdagon, Naamah, and Makkedah: sixteen cities, along with the towns around them.
Jos 15:42 There were also Libnah, Ether, Ashan,
Jos 15:43 Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib,
Jos 15:44 Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah: nine cities, along with the towns around them.
Jos 15:45 There was Ekron with its towns and villages,
Jos 15:46 and all the cities and towns near Ashdod, from Ekron to the Mediterranean Sea.
Jos 15:47 There were Ashdod and Gaza, with their towns and villages, reaching to the stream on the border of Egypt and the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.
Jos 15:48 In the hill country there were Shamir, Jattir, Socoh,
Jos 15:49 Dannah, Kiriath Sepher (or Debir),
Jos 15:50 Anab, Eshtemoa, Anim,

Jos 15:51 Goshen, Holon, and Giloh: eleven cities, along with the towns around them.

Jos 15:52 There were Arab, Dumah, Eshan,

Jos 15:53 Janim, Beth Tappuah, Aphekah,

Jos 15:54 Humtah, Hebron, and Zior: nine cities, along with the towns around them.

Jos 15:55 There were Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah,

Jos 15:56 Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah,

Jos 15:57 Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah: ten cities, along with the towns around them.

Jos 15:58 There were Halhul, Bethzur, Gedor,

Jos 15:59 Maarath, Bethanath, and Eltekon: six cities, along with the towns around them.

Jos 15:60 There were Kiriath Baal (or Kiriath Jearim) and Rabbah: two cities, along with the towns around them.

Jos 15:61 In the desert there were Beth Arabah, Middin, Secacah,

Jos 15:62 Nibshan, Salt City, and Engedi: six cities, along with the towns around them.

Jos 15:63 But the people of Judah were not able to drive out the Jebusites, who lived in Jerusalem. The Jebusites still live there with the people of Judah.

Joshua 15:1-17:18

Joshua 15, 16, 17 - The Inheritance of Judah, Ephraim and Western Manasseh

A. The inheritance of Judah.

1. (15:1-12) The borders of the province of Judah.

So *this* was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families: The border of Edom at the Wilderness of Zin southward was the extreme southern boundary. And their southern border began

at the shore of the Salt Sea, from the bay that faces southward. Then it went out to the southern side of the Ascent of Akrabbim, passed along to Zin, ascended on the south side of Kadesh Barnea, passed along to Hezron, went up to Adar, and went around to Karkaa. *From there* it passed toward Azmon and went out to the Brook of Egypt; and the border ended at the sea. This shall be your southern border. The east border *was* the Salt Sea as far as the mouth of the Jordan. And the border on the northern quarter *began* at the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan. The border went up to Beth Hoglah and passed north of Beth Arabah; and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. Then the border went up toward Debir from the Valley of Achor, and it turned northward toward Gilgal, which *is* before the Ascent of Adummim, which *is* on the south side of the valley. The border continued toward the waters of En Shemesh and ended at En Rogel. And the border went up by the Valley of the Son of Hinnom to the southern slope of the Jebusite *city* (which *is* Jerusalem). The border went up to the top of the mountain that *lies* before the Valley of Hinnom westward, which *is* at the end of the Valley of Rephaim northward. Then the border went around from the top of the hill to the fountain of the water of Nephtoah, and extended to the cities of Mount Ephron. And the border went around to Baalah (which *is* Kirjath Jearim). Then the border turned westward from Baalah to Mount Seir, passed along to the side of Mount Jearim on the north (which *is* Chesalon), went down to Beth Shemesh, and passed on to Timnah. And the border went out to the side of Ekron northward. Then the border went around to Shicron, passed along to Mount Baalah, and extended to Jabneel; and the border ended at the sea. The west border *was* the coastline of the Great Sea.

This *is* the boundary of the children of Judah all around according to their families.

a. **So this was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah:** All this may seem tedious to us, but it certainly was not tedious to those who would possess this land.

2. (13-19) The land allotted to Caleb and his family.

Now to Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a share among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, *namely*, Kirjath Arba, which *is* Hebron (*Arba* was the father of Anak). Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak from there: Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak. Then he went up from there to the inhabitants of Debir (formerly the name of Debir was Kirjath Sepher). And Caleb said, "He who attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give Achsah my daughter as wife." So Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife. Now it was so, when she came *to him*, that she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. So she dismounted from *her* donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you wish?" She answered, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water." So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

a. **He who attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give Achsah my daughter as wife:** Caleb was not only a man of great and bold deeds (the driving out of **the children of Anak**), but also a man who encouraged others to great and bold deeds. He did this by offering his daughter in marriage to the man who was bold enough to conquer a city to have her.

b. **Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water:** As

well, Caleb's daughter imitated her father's boldness in asking for blessing. She did not hesitate to ask her father for some choice **springs**.

3. (20-62) The cities, villages, and regions occupied by the tribe of Judah.

This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families: The cities at the limits of the tribe of the children of Judah, toward the border of Edom in the South, were Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, Ziph, Telem, Bealoth, Hazor, Hadattah, Kerioth, Hezron (which *is* Hazor), Amam, Shema, Moladah, Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth Pelet, Hazar Shual, Beersheba, Bizjothjah, Baalah, Ijim, Ezem, Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah, Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon: all the cities *are* twenty-nine, with their villages. In the lowland: Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah, Zanoah, En Gannim, Tappuah, Enam, Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah, Sharaim, Adithaim, Gederah, and Gederothaim: fourteen cities with their villages; Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal Gad, Dilean, Mizpah, Joktheel, Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon, Cabbon, Lahmas, Kithlish, Gederoth, Beth Dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah: sixteen cities with their villages; Libnah, Ether, Ashan, Jiphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah: nine cities with their villages; Ekron, with its towns and villages; from Ekron to the sea, all that *lay* near Ashdod, with their villages; Ashdod with its towns and villages, Gaza with its towns and villages; as far as the Brook of Egypt and the Great Sea with *its* coastline. And in the mountain country: Shamir, Jattir, Sochoh, Dannah, Kirjath Sannah (which *is* Debir), Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, Goshen, Holon, and Giloh: eleven cities with their villages; Arab, Dumah,

Eshean, Janum, Beth Tappuah, Aphekah, Humtah, Kirjath Arba (which is Hebron), and Zior: nine cities with their villages; Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah: ten cities with their villages; Halhul, Beth Zur, Gedor, Maarath, Beth Anoth, and Eltekon: six cities with their villages; Kirjath Baal (which is Kirjath Jearim) and Rabbah: two cities with their villages. In the wilderness: Beth Arabah, Middin, Secacah, Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En Gedi: six cities with their villages.

4. (63) An incomplete occupation: Jerusalem remains in Canaanite hands.

As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.

a. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: We can understand why Jerusalem was a city hard to conquer. The fact that it was set on a hill made it easy to defend.

b. The Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day: Yet, no matter how hard the struggle, with God's promise, and God's help, we can triumph - there is really no good excuse for why this city must stay in Canaanite hands until the time of David (2Sa 5:6-10).

B. The inheritance of the sons of Joseph.

1. (16:1-4) The borders of the province belonging to the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh settling on the west side of the Jordan.

The lot fell to the children of Joseph from the Jordan, by Jericho, to the waters of Jericho on the east, to the

wilderness that goes up from Jericho through the mountains to Bethel, then went out from Bethel to Luz, passed along to the border of the Archites at Ataroth, and went down westward to the boundary of the Japhletites, as far as the boundary of Lower Beth Horon to Gezer; and it ended at the sea. So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance.

2. (5-10) The borders of the province of Ephraim.

The border of the children of Ephraim, according to their families, was *thus*: The border of their inheritance on the east side was Ataroth Addar as far as Upper Beth Horon. And the border went out toward the sea on the north side of Michmethath; then the border went around eastward to Taanath Shiloh, and passed by it on the east of Janohah. Then it went down from Janohah to Ataroth and Naarah, reached to Jericho, and came out at the Jordan. The border went out from Tappuah westward to the Brook Kanah, and it ended at the sea. This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim according to their families. The separate cities for the children of Ephraim were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages. And they did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites to this day and have become forced laborers.

- a. **And they did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer:** Their failure to completely drive out the Canaanites is typical of all the tribes. Even within the Promised Land there remains important work to do and battles to fight.

b. The Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites to this day and have become forced laborers: Perhaps the people of Ephraim were guilty of this compromise because they wanted **forced laborers** among them. Even this convenience does not justify their disobedience to God's command.

i. If they had the power to make the people of Gezer forced laborers, they certainly had the power to defeat them completely, especially because Gezer was a city that Joshua had already conquered (Jos 10:33 and Jos 12:12).

ii. This sort of compromise seems innocent, but it became the way that much idolatry and immoral worship came into the people of Israel. This is one reason why we see so many struggles in the days of the Judges.

c. They did not drive out the Canaanites: The Israelites did not fully conquer for two reasons. First, they wanted peace at any cost. Second, they wanted wealth. For the sake of *ease* and *money*, they disobeyed God and fell short of what He had for them - as we do today also.

3. (17:1-2) Distribution of the land among the remaining families of the tribe of Manasseh.

There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph: *namely* for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, because he was a man of war; therefore he was given Gilead and Bashan. And there was a lot for the rest of the children of Manasseh according to their families: for the children of Abiezer, the children of Helek, the children of Asriel, the children of Shechem, the children of Hepher, and the children of Shemida;

these were the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families.

4. (3-6) The inheritance of Zelophehad's daughters.

But Zelophehad the son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but only daughters. And these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. And they came near before Eleazar the priest, before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the rulers, saying, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers." Therefore, according to the commandment of the LORD, he gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers. Ten shares fell to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which were on the other side of the Jordan, because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons; and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead.

a. Zelophehad... had no sons, but only daughters:

This is noted in the text because it was unusual for women to receive an inheritance. It was more important that the land remain in the ancestral families than it was to follow this custom. Therefore, the daughters of Zelophehad could inherit their father's land.

b. The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers: This is actually merely the implementation of a decision arrived at by Moses in Num 27:1-11.

5. (7-13) The boundaries of the western half-tribe of Manasseh and their incomplete occupation of that land.

And the territory of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethath, that lies east of Shechem; and the border went along south to the inhabitants of En

Tappuah. Manasseh had the land of Tappuah, but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh *belonged* to the children of Ephraim. And the border descended to the Brook Kanah, southward to the brook. These cities of Ephraim *are* among the cities of Manasseh. The border of Manasseh *was* on the north side of the brook; and it ended at the sea. Southward *it was* Ephraim's, northward *it was* Manasseh's, and the sea was its border. Manasseh's territory was adjoining Asher on the north and Issachar on the east. And in Issachar and in Asher, Manasseh had Beth Shean and its towns, Ibleam and its towns, the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, the inhabitants of En Dor and its towns, the inhabitants of Taanach and its towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns; three hilly regions. Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out *the inhabitants of* those cities, but the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. And it happened, when the children of Israel grew strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out.

a. Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities: Their failure here is after the same pattern as the failure of the tribe of Ephraim in Jos 16:10.

b. But the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land: Of course, the Canaanites would be **determined to dwell in that land**. What was lacking was complete determination from the people of Israel. They were satisfied to **put the Canaanites to forced labor**.

6. (14-18) Joshua answers the complaint of the sons of Joseph.

Then the children of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, “Why have you given us *only* one lot and one share to inherit, since we *are* a great people, inasmuch as the LORD has blessed us until now?” So Joshua answered them, “If you *are* a great people, *then* go up to the forest *country* and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you.” But the children of Joseph said, “The mountain country is not enough for us; and all the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, *both those who are* of Beth Shean and its towns and *those who are* of the Valley of Jezreel.” And Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph; to Ephraim and Manasseh; saying, “You *are* a great people and have great power; you shall not have *only* one lot, but the mountain country shall be yours. Although it *is* wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots *and* are strong.”

a. **Why have you given us only one lot and one share to inherit, since we are a great people:** Manasseh and Ephraim were somewhat large tribes. Their combined number was greater than any other single tribe. Here, they complain that they have not been allotted adequate land.

b. **If you are a great people:** Joshua’s reply is both wise and wonderful. He tells them, “**if you are a great people**, then go and get the land for yourself; fully occupy what the LORD has given you.” These tribes had not completely taken the mountain country in their midst, because it would be hard and dangerous work.

i. How different is their attitude than Caleb’s attitude (Jos 14:11-12)! They want “easy land” given to

them, instead of taking God's promises and going out and taking what God has given them. The principle applies just as strongly for us today; if we desire more of something, the first thing to do is to be as faithful as we can where we are.

ii. Perhaps they appealed to Joshua as a fellow Ephraimite, because he was a descendent of Joseph himself.

The Allotment for Ephraim and Manasseh

Jos 16:1 The southern boundary of the land assigned to the descendants of Joseph started from the Jordan near Jericho, at a point east of the springs of Jericho, and went into the desert. It went from Jericho up into the hill country as far as Bethel.

Jos 16:2 From Bethel it went to Luz, passing on to Ataroth Addar, where the Archites lived.

Jos 16:3 It then went west to the area of the Japhletites, as far as the area of Lower Beth Horon. It went on from there to Gezer and ended at the Mediterranean Sea.

Jos 16:4 The descendants of Joseph, the tribes of Ephraim and West Manasseh, received this land as their possession.

Jos 16:5 This was the territory of the Ephraimite families: their border ran from Ataroth Addar eastward to Upper Beth Horon,

Jos 16:6 and from there to the Mediterranean Sea. Michmethath was on their north. East of there the border bent toward Taanath Shiloh and went past it on the east to Janoah.

Jos 16:7 Then it went down from Janoah to Ataroth and Naarah, reaching Jericho and ending at the Jordan.

Jos 16:8 The border went west from Tappuah to the stream Kanah and ended at the Mediterranean Sea. This was the

land given to the families of the tribe of Ephraim as their possession,

Jos 16:9 along with some towns and villages that were within the borders of Manasseh, but given to the Ephraimites.

Jos 16:10 But they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites have lived among the Ephraimites to this day, but they have been forced to work as slaves.

Joshua 15:1-17:18

Joshua 15, 16, 17 - The Inheritance of Judah, Ephraim and Western Manasseh

A. The inheritance of Judah.

1. (15:1-12) The borders of the province of Judah.

So *this* was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families: The border of Edom at the Wilderness of Zin southward was the extreme southern boundary. And their southern border began at the shore of the Salt Sea, from the bay that faces southward. Then it went out to the southern side of the Ascent of Akrabbim, passed along to Zin, ascended on the south side of Kadesh Barnea, passed along to Hezron, went up to Adar, and went around to Karkaa. *From there* it passed toward Azmon and went out to the Brook of Egypt; and the border ended at the sea. This shall be your southern border. The east border was the Salt Sea as far as the mouth of the Jordan. And the border on the northern quarter *began* at the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan. The border went up to Beth Hoglah and passed north of Beth Arabah; and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. Then the border went up toward Debir from the Valley of Achor, and it turned

northward toward Gilgal, which *is* before the Ascent of Adummim, which *is* on the south side of the valley. The border continued toward the waters of En Shemesh and ended at En Rogel. And the border went up by the Valley of the Son of Hinnom to the southern slope of the Jebusite *city* (which *is* Jerusalem). The border went up to the top of the mountain that *lies* before the Valley of Hinnom westward, which *is* at the end of the Valley of Rephaim northward. Then the border went around from the top of the hill to the fountain of the water of Nephtoah, and extended to the cities of Mount Ephron. And the border went around to Baalah (which *is* Kirjath Jearim). Then the border turned westward from Baalah to Mount Seir, passed along to the side of Mount Jearim on the north (which *is* Chesalon), went down to Beth Shemesh, and passed on to Timnah. And the border went out to the side of Ekron northward. Then the border went around to Shicron, passed along to Mount Baalah, and extended to Jabneel; and the border ended at the sea. The west border *was* the coastline of the Great Sea. This *is* the boundary of the children of Judah all around according to their families.

- a. **So this was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah:** All this may seem tedious to us, but it certainly was not tedious to those who would possess this land.

2. (13-19) The land allotted to Caleb and his family.

Now to Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a share among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, *namely*, Kirjath Arba, which *is* Hebron (*Arba* was the father of Anak). Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak from there: Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak. Then he went up from there to the inhabitants of

Debir (formerly the name of Debir was Kirjath Sepher). And Caleb said, "He who attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give Achsah my daughter as wife." So Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife. Now it was so, when she came to *him*, that she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. So she dismounted from *her* donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you wish?" She answered, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water." So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

a. **He who attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give Achsah my daughter as wife:** Caleb was not only a man of great and bold deeds (the driving out of **the children of Anak**), but also a man who encouraged others to great and bold deeds. He did this by offering his daughter in marriage to the man who was bold enough to conquer a city to have her.

b. **Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water:** As well, Caleb's daughter imitated her father's boldness in asking for blessing. She did not hesitate to ask her father for some choice **springs**.

3. (20-62) *The cities, villages, and regions occupied by the tribe of Judah.*

This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families: The cities at the limits of the tribe of the children of Judah, toward the border of Edom in the South, were Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, Ziph, Telem, Bealoth, Hazor, Hadattah, Kerioth, Hezron (which *is* Hazor), Amam, Shema, Moladah, Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth Pelet, Hazar

Shual, Beersheba, Bizjothjah, Baalah, Ijim, Ezem, Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah, Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon: all the cities *are* twenty-nine, with their villages. In the lowland: Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah, Zanoah, En Gannim, Tappuah, Enam, Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah, Sharaim, Adithaim, Gederah, and Gederothaim: fourteen cities with their villages; Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal Gad, Dilean, Mizpah, Joktheel, Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon, Cabbon, Lahmas, Kithlish, Gederoth, Beth Dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah: sixteen cities with their villages; Libnah, Ether, Ashan, Jiphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah: nine cities with their villages; Ekron, with its towns and villages; from Ekron to the sea, all that *lay* near Ashdod, with their villages; Ashdod with its towns and villages, Gaza with its towns and villages; as far as the Brook of Egypt and the Great Sea with *its* coastline. And in the mountain country: Shamir, Jattir, Sochoh, Dannah, Kirjath Sannah (which *is* Debir), Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, Goshen, Holon, and Giloh: eleven cities with their villages; Arab, Dumah, Eshean, Janum, Beth Tappuah, Aphekah, Humtah, Kirjath Arba (which *is* Hebron), and Zior: nine cities with their villages; Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah: ten cities with their villages; Halhul, Beth Zur, Gedor, Maarath, Beth Anoth, and Eltekon: six cities with their villages; Kirjath Baal (which *is* Kirjath Jearim) and Rabbah: two cities with their villages. In the wilderness: Beth Arabah, Middin, Secacah, Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En Gedi: six cities with their villages.

4. (63) An incomplete occupation: Jerusalem remains in Canaanite hands.

As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.

a. **The inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out:** We can understand why Jerusalem was a city hard to conquer. The fact that it was set on a hill made it easy to defend.

b. **The Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day:** Yet, no matter how hard the struggle, with God's promise, and God's help, we can triumph - there is really no good excuse for why this city must stay in Canaanite hands until the time of David (2Sa 5:6-10).

B. The inheritance of the sons of Joseph.

1. (16:1-4) The borders of the province belonging to the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh settling on the west side of the Jordan.

The lot fell to the children of Joseph from the Jordan, by Jericho, to the waters of Jericho on the east, to the wilderness that goes up from Jericho through the mountains to Bethel, then went out from Bethel to Luz, passed along to the border of the Archites at Ataroth, and went down westward to the boundary of the Japhletites, as far as the boundary of Lower Beth Horon to Gezer; and it ended at the sea. So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance.

2. (5-10) The borders of the province of Ephraim.

The border of the children of Ephraim, according to their families, was *thus*: The border of their inheritance on the east side was Ataroth Addar as far as Upper Beth Horon. And the border went out toward

the sea on the north side of Michmethath; then the border went around eastward to Taanath Shiloh, and passed by it on the east of Janohah. Then it went down from Janohah to Ataroth and Naarah, reached to Jericho, and came out at the Jordan. The border went out from Tappuah westward to the Brook Kanah, and it ended at the sea. This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim according to their families. The separate cities for the children of Ephraim *were* among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages. And they did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites to this day and have become forced laborers.

a. **And they did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer:** Their failure to completely drive out the Canaanites is typical of all the tribes. Even within the Promised Land there remains important work to do and battles to fight.

b. **The Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites to this day and have become forced laborers:** Perhaps the people of Ephraim were guilty of this compromise because they wanted **forced laborers** among them. Even this convenience does not justify their disobedience to God's command.

i. If they had the power to make the people of Gezer forced laborers, they certainly had the power to defeat them completely, especially because Gezer was a city that Joshua had already conquered (Jos 10:33 and Jos 12:12).

ii. This sort of compromise seems innocent, but it became the way that much idolatry and immoral worship came into the people of Israel. This is one

reason why we see so many struggles in the days of the Judges.

c. **They did not drive out the Canaanites:** The Israelites did not fully conquer for two reasons. First, they wanted peace at any cost. Second, they wanted wealth. For the sake of *ease* and *money*, they disobeyed God and fell short of what He had for them - as we do today also.

3. (17:1-2) *Distribution of the land among the remaining families of the tribe of Manasseh.*

There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph: namely for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, because he was a man of war; therefore he was given Gilead and Bashan. And there was a lot for the rest of the children of Manasseh according to their families: for the children of Abiezer, the children of Helek, the children of Asriel, the children of Shechem, the children of Hepher, and the children of Shemida; these were the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families.

4. (3-6) *The inheritance of Zelophehad's daughters.*

But Zelophehad the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but only daughters. And these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. And they came near before Eleazar the priest, before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the rulers, saying, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers." Therefore, according to the commandment of the LORD, he gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers. Ten shares fell to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which were on the other side of

the Jordan, because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons; and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead.

a. Zelophehad... had no sons, but only daughters:

This is noted in the text because it was unusual for women to receive an inheritance. It was more important that the land remain in the ancestral families than it was to follow this custom. Therefore, the daughters of Zelophehad could inherit their father's land.

b. The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers: This is actually merely the implementation of a decision arrived at by Moses in Num 27:1-11.

5. (7-13) The boundaries of the western half-tribe of Manasseh and their incomplete occupation of that land.

And the territory of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethath, that *lies* east of Shechem; and the border went along south to the inhabitants of En Tappuah. Manasseh had the land of Tappuah, but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh *belonged* to the children of Ephraim. And the border descended to the Brook Kanah, southward to the brook. These cities of Ephraim *are* among the cities of Manasseh. The border of Manasseh *was* on the north side of the brook; and it ended at the sea. Southward *it was* Ephraim's, northward *it was* Manasseh's, and the sea was its border. Manasseh's territory was adjoining Asher on the north and Issachar on the east. And in Issachar and in Asher, Manasseh had Beth Shean and its towns, Ibleam and its towns, the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, the inhabitants of En Dor and its towns, the inhabitants of Taanach and its towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns; three hilly regions. Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive

out *the inhabitants* of those cities, but the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. And it happened, when the children of Israel grew strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out.

a. Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities: Their failure here is after the same pattern as the failure of the tribe of Ephraim in Jos 16:10.

b. But the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land: Of course, the Canaanites would be **determined to dwell in that land**. What was lacking was complete determination from the people of Israel. They were satisfied to **put the Canaanites to forced labor**.

6. (14-18) Joshua answers the complaint of the sons of Joseph.

Then the children of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given us *only* one lot and one share to inherit, since we *are* a great people, inasmuch as the LORD has blessed us until now?" So Joshua answered them, "If you *are* a great people, *then* go up to the forest *country* and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you." But the children of Joseph said, "The mountain country is not enough for us; and all the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, *both those who are* of Beth Shean and its towns and *those who are* of the Valley of Jezreel." And Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph; to Ephraim and Manasseh; saying, "You *are* a great people and have great power; you shall not have *only* one lot, but the mountain country shall be yours. Although it *is*

wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots *and* are strong."

a. Why have you given us only one lot and one share to inherit, since we are a great people:

Manasseh and Ephraim were somewhat large tribes. Their combined number was greater than any other single tribe. Here, they complain that they have not been allotted adequate land.

b. If you are a great people: Joshua's reply is both wise and wonderful. He tells them, "**if you are a great people**, then go and get the land for yourself; fully occupy what the LORD has given you." These tribes had not completely taken the mountain country in their midst, because it would be hard and dangerous work.

i. How different is their attitude than Caleb's attitude (Jos 14:11-12)! They want "easy land" given to them, instead of taking God's promises and going out and taking what God has given them. The principle applies just as strongly for us today; if we desire more of something, the first thing to do is to be as faithful as we can where we are.

ii. Perhaps they appealed to Joshua as a fellow Ephraimite, because he was a descendent of Joseph himself.

Jos 17:1 A part of the land west of the Jordan was assigned to some of the families descended from Joseph's older son Manasseh. Machir, the father of Gilead, was Manasseh's oldest son and a military hero, so Gilead and Bashan, east of the Jordan, were assigned to him.

Jos 17:2 Land west of the Jordan was assigned to the rest of the families of Manasseh: Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hephher, and Shemida. These were male

descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph, and they were heads of families.

Jos 17:3 Zelophehad, son of Hephher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, did not have any sons, but only daughters. Their names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

Jos 17:4 They went to Eleazar the priest and to Joshua son of Nun and to the leaders, and said, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us, as well as our male relatives, a part of the land to possess." So, as the LORD had commanded, they were given land along with their male relatives.

Jos 17:5 This is why Manasseh received ten shares in addition to Gilead and Bashan on the east side of the Jordan,

Jos 17:6 since his female descendants as well as his male descendants were assigned land. The land of Gilead was assigned to the rest of the descendants of Manasseh.

Jos 17:7 The territory of Manasseh reached from Asher to Michmethath, east of Shechem. The border then went south to include the people of Entappuah.

Jos 17:8 The land around Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but the town of Tappuah, on the border, belonged to the descendants of Ephraim.

Jos 17:9 The border then went down to the stream Kanah. The cities south of the stream belonged to Ephraim, even though they were in the territory of Manasseh. The border of Manasseh proceeded along the north side of the stream and ended at the Mediterranean Sea.

Jos 17:10 Ephraim was to the south, and Manasseh was to the north, with the Mediterranean Sea as their western border. Asher was to the northwest, and Issachar to the northeast.

Jos 17:11 Within the territories of Issachar and Asher, Manasseh possessed Beth Shan and Ibleam, along with their

surrounding towns, as well as Dor (the one on the coast), Endor, Taanach, Megiddo, and their surrounding towns.

Jos 17:12 The people of Manasseh, however, were not able to drive out the people living in those cities, so the Canaanites continued to live there.

Jos 17:13 Even when the Israelites became stronger, they did not drive out all the Canaanites, but they did force them to work for them.

Jos 17:14 The descendants of Joseph said to Joshua, "Why have you given us only one part of the land to possess as our own? There are very many of us because the LORD has blessed us."

Jos 17:15 Joshua answered, "If there are so many of you and the hill country of Ephraim is too small for you, then go into the forests and clear ground for yourselves in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim."

Jos 17:16 They replied, "The hill country is not big enough for us, but the Canaanites in the plains have iron chariots, both those who live in Beth Shan and its surrounding towns and those who live in Jezreel Valley."

Jos 17:17 Joshua said to the tribes of Ephraim and West Manasseh, "There are indeed many of you, and you are very powerful. You shall have more than one share."

Jos 17:18 The hill country will be yours. Even though it is a forest, you will clear it and take possession of it from one end to the other. As for the Canaanites, you will drive them out, even though they do have iron chariots and are a strong people."

Joshua 15:1-17:18

Joshua 15, 16, 17 - The Inheritance of Judah, Ephraim and Western Manasseh

A. The inheritance of Judah.

1. (15:1-12) *The borders of the province of Judah.*

So *this* was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families: The border of Edom at the Wilderness of Zin southward was the extreme southern boundary. And their southern border began at the shore of the Salt Sea, from the bay that faces southward. Then it went out to the southern side of the Ascent of Akrabbim, passed along to Zin, ascended on the south side of Kadesh Barnea, passed along to Hezron, went up to Adar, and went around to Karkaa. *From there* it passed toward Azmon and went out to the Brook of Egypt; and the border ended at the sea. This shall be your southern border. The east border was the Salt Sea as far as the mouth of the Jordan. And the border on the northern quarter *began* at the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan. The border went up to Beth Hoglah and passed north of Beth Arabah; and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. Then the border went up toward Debir from the Valley of Achor, and it turned northward toward Gilgal, which *is* before the Ascent of Adummim, which *is* on the south side of the valley. The border continued toward the waters of En Shemesh and ended at En Rogel. And the border went up by the Valley of the Son of Hinnom to the southern slope of the Jebusite *city* (which *is* Jerusalem). The border went up to the top of the mountain that *lies* before the Valley of Hinnom westward, which *is* at the end of the Valley of Rephaim northward. Then the border went around from the top of the hill to the fountain of the water of Nephtoah, and extended to the cities of Mount Ephron. And the border went around to Baalah (which *is* Kirjath Jearim). Then the border turned westward from Baalah to Mount Seir, passed along to the side of Mount Jearim on the north

(which *is* Chesalon), went down to Beth Shemesh, and passed on to Timnah. And the border went out to the side of Ekron northward. Then the border went around to Shicron, passed along to Mount Baalah, and extended to Jabneel; and the border ended at the sea. The west border *was* the coastline of the Great Sea. This *is* the boundary of the children of Judah all around according to their families.

- a. **So this was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah:** All this may seem tedious to us, but it certainly was not tedious to those who would possess this land.

2. (13-19) *The land allotted to Caleb and his family.*

Now to Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a share among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, *namely*, Kirjath Arba, which *is* Hebron (*Arba was* the father of Anak). Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak from there: Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak. Then he went up from there to the inhabitants of Debir (formerly the name of Debir was Kirjath Sepher). And Caleb said, "He who attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give Achsah my daughter as wife." So Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife. Now it was so, when she came *to him*, that she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. So she dismounted from *her* donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you wish?" She answered, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water." So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

- a. **He who attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give Achsah my daughter as wife:** Caleb was not only a man of great and bold deeds (the driving

out of **the children of Anak**), but also a man who encouraged others to great and bold deeds. He did this by offering his daughter in marriage to the man who was bold enough to conquer a city to have her.

b. **Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water:** As well, Caleb's daughter imitated her father's boldness in asking for blessing. She did not hesitate to ask her father for some choice **springs**.

3. (20-62) The cities, villages, and regions occupied by the tribe of Judah.

This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families: The cities at the limits of the tribe of the children of Judah, toward the border of Edom in the South, were Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, Ziph, Telem, Bealoth, Hazor, Hadattah, Kerioth, Hezron (which *is* Hazor), Amam, Shema, Moladah, Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth Pelet, Hazar Shual, Beersheba, Bizjothjah, Baalah, Ijim, Ezem, Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah, Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon: all the cities *are* twenty-nine, with their villages. In the lowland: Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah, Zanoah, En Gannim, Tappuah, Enam, Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah, Sharaim, Adithaim, Gederah, and Gederothaim: fourteen cities with their villages; Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal Gad, Dilean, Mizpah, Joktheel, Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon, Cabbon, Lahmas, Kithlish, Gederoth, Beth Dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah: sixteen cities with their villages; Libnah, Ether, Ashan, Jiphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah: nine cities with their villages; Ekron, with its towns and villages; from Ekron to the sea, all that *lay* near

Ashdod, with their villages; Ashdod with its towns and villages, Gaza with its towns and villages; as far as the Brook of Egypt and the Great Sea with *its* coastline. And in the mountain country: Shamir, Jattir, Sochoh, Dannah, Kirjath Sannah (which *is* Debir), Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, Goshen, Holon, and Giloh: eleven cities with their villages; Arab, Dumah, Eshean, Janum, Beth Tappuah, Aphekah, Humtah, Kirjath Arba (which *is* Hebron), and Zior: nine cities with their villages; Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah: ten cities with their villages; Halhul, Beth Zur, Gedor, Maarath, Beth Anoth, and Eltekon: six cities with their villages; Kirjath Baal (which *is* Kirjath Jearim) and Rabbah: two cities with their villages. In the wilderness: Beth Arabah, Middin, Secacah, Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En Gedi: six cities with their villages.

4. (63) An incomplete occupation: Jerusalem remains in Canaanite hands.

As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.

a. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: We can understand why Jerusalem was a city hard to conquer. The fact that it was set on a hill made it easy to defend.

b. The Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day: Yet, no matter how hard the struggle, with God's promise, and God's help, we can triumph - there is really no good excuse for why this city must stay in Canaanite hands until the time of David (2Sa 5:6-10).

B. The inheritance of the sons of Joseph.

1. (16:1-4) The borders of the province belonging to the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh settling on the west side of the Jordan.

The lot fell to the children of Joseph from the Jordan, by Jericho, to the waters of Jericho on the east, to the wilderness that goes up from Jericho through the mountains to Bethel, then went out from Bethel to Luz, passed along to the border of the Archites at Ataroth, and went down westward to the boundary of the Japhletites, as far as the boundary of Lower Beth Horon to Gezer; and it ended at the sea. So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance.

2. (5-10) The borders of the province of Ephraim.

The border of the children of Ephraim, according to their families, was *thus*: The border of their inheritance on the east side was Ataroth Addar as far as Upper Beth Horon. And the border went out toward the sea on the north side of Michmethath; then the border went around eastward to Taanath Shiloh, and passed by it on the east of Janohah. Then it went down from Janohah to Ataroth and Naarah, reached to Jericho, and came out at the Jordan. The border went out from Tappuah westward to the Brook Kanah, and it ended at the sea. This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim according to their families. The separate cities for the children of Ephraim were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages. And they did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites to this day and have become forced laborers.

a. **And they did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer:** Their failure to completely drive out the Canaanites is typical of all the tribes. Even within the Promised Land there remains important work to do and battles to fight.

b. **The Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites to this day and have become forced laborers:** Perhaps the people of Ephraim were guilty of this compromise because they wanted **forced laborers** among them. Even this convenience does not justify their disobedience to God's command.

i. If they had the power to make the people of Gezer forced laborers, they certainly had the power to defeat them completely, especially because Gezer was a city that Joshua had already conquered (Jos 10:33 and Jos 12:12).

ii. This sort of compromise seems innocent, but it became the way that much idolatry and immoral worship came into the people of Israel. This is one reason why we see so many struggles in the days of the Judges.

c. **They did not drive out the Canaanites:** The Israelites did not fully conquer for two reasons. First, they wanted peace at any cost. Second, they wanted wealth. For the sake of *ease* and *money*, they disobeyed God and fell short of what He had for them - as we do today also.

3. (17:1-2) *Distribution of the land among the remaining families of the tribe of Manasseh.*

There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph: namely for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, because he was a man of war; therefore he was given Gilead

and Bashan. And there was *a lot* for the rest of the children of Manasseh according to their families: for the children of Abiezer, the children of Helek, the children of Asriel, the children of Shechem, the children of Hephher, and the children of Shemida; these *were* the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families.

4. (3-6) *The inheritance of Zelophehad's daughters.*

But Zelophehad the son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but only daughters. And these *are* the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. And they came near before Eleazar the priest, before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the rulers, saying, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers." Therefore, according to the commandment of the LORD, he gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers. Ten shares fell to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which *were* on the other side of the Jordan, because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons; and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead.

a. **Zelophehad... had no sons, but only daughters:**

This is noted in the text because it was unusual for women to receive an inheritance. It was more important that the land remain in the ancestral families than it was to follow this custom. Therefore, the daughters of Zelophehad could inherit their father's land.

b. **The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers:** This is actually merely the implementation of a decision arrived at by Moses in Num 27:1-11.

5. (7-13) *The boundaries of the western half-tribe of Manasseh and their incomplete occupation of that land.*

And the territory of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethath, that *lies* east of Shechem; and the border went along south to the inhabitants of En Tappuah. Manasseh had the land of Tappuah, but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh *belonged* to the children of Ephraim. And the border descended to the Brook Kanah, southward to the brook. These cities of Ephraim *are* among the cities of Manasseh. The border of Manasseh *was* on the north side of the brook; and it ended at the sea. Southward *it was* Ephraim's, northward *it was* Manasseh's, and the sea was its border. Manasseh's territory was adjoining Asher on the north and Issachar on the east. And in Issachar and in Asher, Manasseh had Beth Shean and its towns, Ibleam and its towns, the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, the inhabitants of En Dor and its towns, the inhabitants of Taanach and its towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns; three hilly regions. Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out *the inhabitants of* those cities, but the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. And it happened, when the children of Israel grew strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out.

a. **Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities:** Their failure here is after the same pattern as the failure of the tribe of Ephraim in Jos 16:10.

b. **But the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land:** Of course, the Canaanites would be **determined to dwell in that land**. What was lacking was complete determination from the people of Israel.

They were satisfied to **put the Canaanites to forced labor.**

6. (14-18) *Joshua answers the complaint of the sons of Joseph.*

Then the children of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given us *only* one lot and one share to inherit, since we *are* a great people, inasmuch as the LORD has blessed us until now?" So Joshua answered them, "If you *are* a great people, *then* go up to the forest *country* and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you." But the children of Joseph said, "The mountain country is not enough for us; and all the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, *both those who are* of Beth Shean and its towns and *those who are* of the Valley of Jezreel." And Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph; to Ephraim and Manasseh; saying, "You *are* a great people and have great power; you shall not have *only* one lot, but the mountain country shall be yours. Although it *is* wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots *and are* strong."

a. **Why have you given us only one lot and one share to inherit, since we are a great people:** Manasseh and Ephraim were somewhat large tribes. Their combined number was greater than any other single tribe. Here, they complain that they have not been allotted adequate land.

b. **If you are a great people:** Joshua's reply is both wise and wonderful. He tells them, "**if you are a great people**, then go and get the land for yourself; fully occupy what the LORD has given you." These tribes had

not completely taken the mountain country in their midst, because it would be hard and dangerous work.

i. How different is their attitude than Caleb's attitude (Jos 14:11-12)! They want "easy land" given to them, instead of taking God's promises and going out and taking what God has given them. The principle applies just as strongly for us today; if we desire more of something, the first thing to do is to be a faithful as we can where we are.

ii. Perhaps they appealed to Joshua as a fellow Ephraimite, because he was a descendent of Joseph himself.

Allotment of the Remaining Land

Jos 18:1 After they had conquered the land, the entire community of Israel assembled at Shiloh and set up the Tent of the LORD's presence.

Jos 18:2 There were still seven tribes of the people of Israel who had not yet been assigned their share of the land.

Jos 18:3 So Joshua said to the people of Israel, "How long are you going to wait before you go in and take the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you?"

Jos 18:4 Let me have three men from each tribe. I will send them out over the whole country to map out the territory that they would like to have as their possession. Then they are to come back to me.

Jos 18:5 The land will be divided among them in seven parts; Judah will stay in its territory in the south, and Joseph in its territory in the north.

Jos 18:6 Write down a description of these seven divisions and bring it to me. Then I will draw lots to consult the LORD our God for you.

Jos 18:7 The Levites, however, will not receive a share of the land with the rest of you, because their share is to serve

as the LORD's priests. And of course, the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and East Manasseh have already received their land east of the Jordan, which Moses, the LORD's servant, gave to them."

Jos 18:8 The men went on their way to map out the land after Joshua had given them these instructions: "Go all over the land and map it out, and come back to me. And then here in Shiloh I will consult the LORD for you by drawing lots."

Jos 18:9 So the men went all over the land and set down in writing how they divided it into seven parts, making a list of the towns. Then they went back to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh.

Jos 18:10 Joshua drew lots to consult the LORD for them, and assigned each of the remaining tribes of Israel a certain part of the land.

The Inheritance for Benjamin

Jos 18:11 The territory belonging to the families of the tribe of Benjamin was the first to be assigned. Their land lay between the tribes of Judah and Joseph.

Jos 18:12 On the north their border began at the Jordan and then went up the slope north of Jericho and westward through the hill country as far as the desert of Bethaven.

Jos 18:13 The border then went to the slope on the south side of Luz (also called Bethel), then down to Ataroth Addar, on the mountain south of Lower Beth Horon.

Jos 18:14 The border then went in another direction, turning south from the western side of this mountain and going to Kiriath Baal (or Kiriath Jearim), which belongs to the tribe of Judah. This was the western border.

Jos 18:15 The southern border started on the edge of Kiriath Jearim and went to the Springs of Nephtoah.

Jos 18:16 It then went down to the foot of the mountain that overlooks Hinnom Valley, at the north end of Rephaim Valley. It then went south through Hinnom Valley, south of the Jebusite ridge, toward Enrogel.

Jos 18:17 It then turned north to Enshemesh and then on to Geliloth, opposite Adummim Pass. The border then went down to the Stone of Bohan (Bohan was a son of Reuben)

Jos 18:18 and passed north of the ridge overlooking the Jordan Valley. It then went down into the valley,

Jos 18:19 passing north of the ridge of Beth Hoglah, and ended at the northern inlet on the Dead Sea, where the Jordan River empties into it. This was the southern border.

Jos 18:20 The Jordan was the eastern border. These were the borders of the land which the families of the tribe of Benjamin received as their possession.

Jos 18:21 The cities belonging to the families of the tribe of Benjamin were Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz,

Jos 18:22 Beth Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel,

Jos 18:23 Avvim, Parah, Ophrah,

Jos 18:24 Chepharammoni, Ophni, and Geba: twelve cities, along with the towns around them.

Jos 18:25 There were also Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth,

Jos 18:26 Mizpah, Chephirah, Mozah,

Jos 18:27 Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah,

Jos 18:28 Zela, Haeleph, Jebus (or Jerusalem), Gibeah, and Kiriath Jearim: fourteen cities, along with the towns around them. This is the land which the families of the tribe of Benjamin received as their possession.

Joshua 18:1-19:51

Joshua 18, 19 - Inheritance of the Remaining Tribes

A. The survey of the land for the seven remaining tribes.

1. (18:1-3) *At Shiloh, Joshua exhorts the remaining tribes to possess their land.*

Now the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of meeting there. And the land was subdued before them. But there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance. Then Joshua said to the children of Israel: "How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers has given you?"

a. **But there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance:** Why would they not want to possess their land? Why would Joshua need to prod them? Probably because these are people who had not lived in permanent dwellings for more than a generation, and they were afraid of something new, even if it was good.

b. **How long will you neglect to go and possess the land:** Whatever the exact reason, the bottom line was **neglect**. They did not fulfill what God had called them to do.

2. (4-8) *Joshua instructs a survey party to go out and assess the land that it may be divided among the seven remaining tribes.*

"Pick out from among you three men for *each* tribe, and I will send them; they shall rise and go through the land, survey it according to their inheritance, and come *back* to me. And they shall divide it into seven parts. Judah shall remain in their territory on the south, and the house of Joseph shall remain in their territory on the north. You shall therefore survey the land in seven parts and bring *the survey* here to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the LORD our

God. But the Levites have no part among you, for the priesthood of the LORD *is* their inheritance. And Gad, Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan on the east, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them.” Then the men arose to go away; and Joshua charged those who went to survey the land, saying, “Go, walk through the land, survey it, and come back to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh.”

3. (9-10) The successful survey party returns and Joshua casts lots to determine which tribes will receive which land.

So the men went, passed through the land, and wrote the survey in a book in seven parts by cities; and they came to Joshua at the camp in Shiloh. Then Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD, and there Joshua divided the land to the children of Israel according to their divisions.

B. The final division of the land.

1. (11-28) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Benjamin.

Now the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according to their families, and the territory of their lot came out between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph. Their border on the north side began at the Jordan, and the border went up to the side of Jericho on the north, and went up through the mountains westward; it ended at the Wilderness of Beth Aven. The border went over from there toward Luz, to the side of Luz (which *is* Bethel) southward; and the border descended to Ataroth Addar, near the hill that *lies* on the south side of Lower Beth Horon. Then the border extended around the west side to the south, from the hill that *lies*

before Beth Horon southward; and it ended at Kirjath Baal (which *is* Kirjath Jearim), a city of the children of Judah. This *was* the west side. The south side *began* at the end of Kirjath Jearim, and the border extended on the west and went out to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah. Then the border came down to the end of the mountain that *lies* before the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which *is* in the Valley of the Rephaim on the north, descended to the Valley of Hinnom, to the side of the Jebusite *city* on the south, and descended to En Rogel. And it went around from the north, went out to En Shemesh, and extended toward Geliloth, which is before the Ascent of Adummim, and descended to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. Then it passed along toward the north side of Arabah, and went down to Arabah. And the border passed along to the north side of Beth Hoglah; then the border ended at the north bay at the Salt Sea, at the south end of the Jordan. This *was* the southern boundary. The Jordan was its border on the east side. This *was* the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, according to its boundaries all around, according to their families. Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, according to their families, were Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz, Beth Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, Avim, Parah, Ophrah, Chephar Haammoni, Ophni, and Gaba: twelve cities with their villages; Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, Mizpah, Chephirah, Mozah, Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, Zelah, Eleph, Jebus (which *is* Jerusalem), Gibeath, *and* Kirjath: fourteen cities with their villages. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin according to their families.

2. (19:1-9) *The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Simeon.*

The second lot came out for Simeon, for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families. And their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah. They had in their inheritance Beersheba (Sheba), Moladah, Hazar Shual, Balah, Ezem, Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah, Ziklag, Beth Marcaboth, Hazar Susah, Beth Lebaoth, and Sharuhem: thirteen cities and their villages; Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan: four cities and their villages; and all the villages that *were* all around these cities as far as Baalath Beer, Ramah of the South. This *was* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families. The inheritance of the children of Simeon *was included* in the share of the children of Judah, for the share of the children of Judah was too much for them. Therefore the children of Simeon had *their* inheritance within the inheritance of that people.

3. (10-16) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Zebulun.

The third lot came out for the children of Zebulun according to their families, and the border of their inheritance was as far as Sarid. Their border went toward the west and to Maralah, went to Dabbasheth, and extended along the brook that is east of Jokneam. Then from Sarid it went eastward toward the sunrise along the border of Chisloth Tabor, and went out toward Daberath, bypassing Japhia. And from there it passed along on the east of Gath Hepher, toward Eth Kazin, and extended to Rimmon, which borders on Neah. Then the border went around it on the north side of Hannathon, and it ended in the Valley of Jiphthah El. Included were Kattath, Nahallal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem: twelve cities with their villages. This *was* the inheritance of the children of

Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages.

4. (17-23) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Issachar.

The fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of Issachar according to their families. And their territory went to Jezreel, and *included* Chesulloth, Shunem, Haphraim, Shion, Anaharath, Rabbith, Kishion, Abez, Remeth, En Gannim, En Haddah, and Beth Pazzez. And the border reached to Tabor, Shahazimah, and Beth Shemesh; their border ended at the Jordan: sixteen cities with their villages. This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar according to their families, the cities and their villages.

5. (24-31) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Asher.

The fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families. And their territory included Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, Alammelech, Amad, and Mishal; it reached to Mount Carmel westward, along *the Brook* Shihor Libnath. It turned toward the sunrise to Beth Dagon; and it reached to Zebulun and to the Valley of Jiphthah El, then northward beyond Beth Emek and Neiel, bypassing Cabul *which was* on the left, including Ebron, Rehob, Hammon, and Kanah, as far as Greater Sidon. And the border turned to Ramah and to the fortified city of Tyre; then the border turned to Hosah, and ended at the sea by the region of Achzib. Also Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob *were included*: twenty-two cities with their villages. This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.

6. (32-39) *The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Naphtali.*

The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali, for the children of Naphtali according to their families. And their border began at Heleph, enclosing the territory from the terebinth tree in Zaanannim, Adami Nekeb, and Jabneel, as far as Lakkum; it ended at the Jordan. From Heleph the border extended westward to Aznoth Tabor, and went out from there toward Hukkok; it adjoined Zebulun on the south side and Asher on the west side, and ended at Judah by the Jordan toward the sunrise. And the fortified cities *are* Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth, Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, Kedesh, Edrei, En Hazor, Iron, Migdal El, Horem, Beth Anath, and Beth Shemesh: nineteen cities with their villages. This *was* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali according to their families, the cities and their villages.

7. (40-48) *The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Dan.*

The seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families. And the territory of their inheritance was Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir Shemesh, Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Jethlah, Elon, Timnah, Ekron, Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, Jehud, Bene Berak, Gath Rimmon, Me Jarkon, and Rakkon, with the region near Joppa. And the border of the children of Dan went beyond these, because the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem and took it; and they struck it with the edge of the sword, took possession of it, and dwelt in it. They called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father. This *is* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.

8. (49-51) *Joshua's inheritance.*

When they had made an end of dividing the land as an inheritance according to their borders, the children of Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua the son of Nun. According to the word of the LORD they gave him the city which he asked for, Timnath Serah in the mountains of Ephraim; and he built the city and dwelt in it. These *were* the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel divided as an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. So they made an end of dividing the country.

- a. **When they had made an end of dividing the land:**
Joshua received what was promised to him by God, but in remarkable humility, he receives his portion last. This is the kind of humble service and concern for others that makes Joshua such a wonderful picture of Jesus Christ.

The Inheritance for Simeon

Jos 19:1 The second assignment made was for the families of the tribe of Simeon. Its territory extended into the land assigned to the tribe of Judah.

Jos 19:2 It included Beersheba, Sheba, Moladah,

Jos 19:3 Hazar Shual, Balah, Ezem,

Jos 19:4 Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah,

Jos 19:5 Ziklag, Beth Marcaboth, Hazar Susah,

Jos 19:6 Beth Lebaoth, and Sharuhem: thirteen cities, along with the towns around them.

Jos 19:7 There were also Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan: four cities, along with the towns around them.

Jos 19:8 This included all the towns around these cities as far as Baalath Beer (or Ramah), in the south. This was the land which the families of the tribe of Simeon received as their possession.

Jos 19:9 Since Judah's assignment was larger than was needed, part of its territory was given to the tribe of Simeon.

The Inheritance for Zebulun

Jos 19:10 The third assignment made was for the families of the tribe of Zebulun. The land which they received reached as far as Sarid.

Jos 19:11 From there the border went west to Marel, touching Dabbesheth and the stream east of Jokneam.

Jos 19:12 On the other side of Sarid it went east to the border of Chisloth Tabor, then to Daberath and up to Japhia.

Jos 19:13 It continued east from there to Gath Hopher and Ethkazin, turning in the direction of Neah on the way to Rimmon.

Jos 19:14 On the north the border turned toward Hannathon, ending at Iphtahel Valley.

Jos 19:15 It included Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem: twelve cities, along with the towns around them.

Jos 19:16 These cities and their towns were in the land which the families of the tribe of Zebulun received as their possession.

The Inheritance for Issachar

Jos 19:17 The fourth assignment made was for the families of the tribe of Issachar.

Jos 19:18 Its area included Jezreel, Chesulloth, Shunem,

Jos 19:19 Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath,

Jos 19:20 Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez,

Jos 19:21 Remeth, Engannim, Enhaddah, and Bethpazzez.

Jos 19:22 The border also touched Tabor, Shahazumah, and Beth Shemesh, ending at the Jordan. It included

sixteen cities along with the towns around them.

Jos 19:23 These cities and their towns were in the land which the families of the tribe of Issachar received as their possession.

The Inheritance for Asher

Jos 19:24 The fifth assignment made was for the families of the tribe of Asher.

Jos 19:25 Its area included Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph,

Jos 19:26 Allam Melech, Amad, and Mishal. On the west it touched Carmel and Shihor Libnath.

Jos 19:27 As it turned east, the border went to Bethdagon, touching Zebulun and Iphtahel Valley on the way north to Bethemek and Neiel. It continued north to Cabul,

Jos 19:28 Ebron, Rehob, Hammon, and Kanah, as far as Sidon.

Jos 19:29 The border then turned to Ramah, reaching the fortified city of Tyre; then it turned to Hosah and ended at the Mediterranean Sea. It included Mahalab, Achzib,

Jos 19:30 Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob: twenty-two cities, along with the towns around them.

Jos 19:31 These cities and their towns were in the land which the families of the tribe of Asher received as their possession.

The Inheritance for Naphtali

Jos 19:32 The sixth assignment made was for the families of the tribe of Naphtali.

Jos 19:33 Its border went from Heleph to the oak in Zaananim, on to Adaminekeb and to Jamnia, as far as Lakkum, and ended at the Jordan.

Jos 19:34 There the border turned west to Aznoth Tabor, from there to Hukkok, touching Zebulun on the south,

Asher on the west, and the Jordan on the east.

Jos 19:35 The fortified cities were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth,

Jos 19:36 Adamah, Ramah, Hazor,

Jos 19:37 Kedesh, Edrei, Enhazor,

Jos 19:38 Yiron, Migdalel, Horem, Bethanath, and Beth Shemesh: nineteen cities, along with the towns around them.

Jos 19:39 These cities and their towns were in the land which the families of the tribe of Naphtali received as their possession.

The Inheritance for Dan

Jos 19:40 The seventh assignment made was for the families of the tribe of Dan.

Jos 19:41 Its area included Zorah, Eshtaol, Irshemesh,

Jos 19:42 Shaalbim, Aijalon, Ithlah,

Jos 19:43 Elon, Timnah, Ekron,

Jos 19:44 Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath,

Jos 19:45 Jehud, Beneberak, Gathrimmon,

Jos 19:46 Mejarkon, and Rakkon, as well as the territory around Joppa.

Jos 19:47 When the people of Dan lost their land, they went to Laish and attacked it. They captured it, killed its people, and claimed it for themselves. They settled there and changed the name of the city from Laish to Dan, naming it after their ancestor Dan.

Jos 19:48 These cities and their towns were in the land which the families of the tribe of Dan received as their possession.

The Inheritance for Joshua

Jos 19:49 When the people of Israel finished dividing up the land, they gave Joshua son of Nun a part of the land as his own.

Jos 19:50 As the LORD had commanded, they gave him the city he asked for: Timnath Serah, in the hill country of Ephraim. He rebuilt the city and settled there.

Jos 19:51 Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the leaders of the families of the tribes of Israel assigned these parts of the land by drawing lots to consult the LORD at Shiloh, at the entrance of the Tent of the LORD's presence. In this way they finished dividing the land.

Joshua 18:1-19:51

Joshua 18, 19 - Inheritance of the Remaining Tribes

A. The survey of the land for the seven remaining tribes.

1. (18:1-3) At Shiloh, Joshua exhorts the remaining tribes to possess their land.

Now the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of meeting there. And the land was subdued before them. But there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance. Then Joshua said to the children of Israel: "How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers has given you?"

a. **But there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance:** Why would they not want to possess their land? Why would Joshua need to prod them? Probably because these are people who had not lived in permanent dwellings for more than a generation, and they were afraid of something new, even if it was good.

b. **How long will you neglect to go and possess the land:** Whatever the exact reason, the bottom line was **neglect**. They did not fulfill what God had called them to do.

2. (4-8) *Joshua instructs a survey party to go out and assess the land that it may be divided among the seven remaining tribes.*

"Pick out from among you three men for *each* tribe, and I will send them; they shall rise and go through the land, survey it according to their inheritance, and come *back* to me. And they shall divide it into seven parts. Judah shall remain in their territory on the south, and the house of Joseph shall remain in their territory on the north. You shall therefore survey the land in seven parts and bring *the survey* here to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the LORD our God. But the Levites have no part among you, for the priesthood of the LORD *is* their inheritance. And Gad, Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan on the east, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them." Then the men arose to go away; and Joshua charged those who went to survey the land, saying, "Go, walk through the land, survey it, and come back to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh."

3. (9-10) *The successful survey party returns and Joshua casts lots to determine which tribes will receive which land.*

So the men went, passed through the land, and wrote the survey in a book in seven parts by cities; and they came to Joshua at the camp in Shiloh. Then Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD, and there Joshua divided the land to the children of Israel according to their divisions.

B. The final division of the land.

1. (11-28) *The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Benjamin.*

Now the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according to their families, and the territory of their lot came out between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph. Their border on the north side began at the Jordan, and the border went up to the side of Jericho on the north, and went up through the mountains westward; it ended at the Wilderness of Beth Aven. The border went over from there toward Luz, to the side of Luz (which *is* Bethel) southward; and the border descended to Ataroth Addar, near the hill that *lies* on the south side of Lower Beth Horon. Then the border extended around the west side to the south, from the hill that *lies* before Beth Horon southward; and it ended at Kirjath Baal (which *is* Kirjath Jearim), a city of the children of Judah. This *was* the west side. The south side *began* at the end of Kirjath Jearim, and the border extended on the west and went out to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah. Then the border came down to the end of the mountain that *lies* before the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which *is* in the Valley of the Rephaim on the north, descended to the Valley of Hinnom, to the side of the Jebusite *city* on the south, and descended

to En Rogel. And it went around from the north, went out to En Shemesh, and extended toward Geliloth, which is before the Ascent of Adummim, and descended to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. Then it passed along toward the north side of Arabah, and went down to Arabah. And the border passed along to the north side of Beth Hoglah; then the border ended at the north bay at the Salt Sea, at the south end of the Jordan. This was the southern boundary. The Jordan was its border on the east side. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, according to its boundaries all around, according to their families. Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, according to their families, were Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz, Beth Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, Avim, Parah, Ophrah, Chephar Haammoni, Ophni, and Gaba: twelve cities with their villages; Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, Mizpah, Chephirah, Mozah, Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, Zelah, Eleph, Jebus (which is Jerusalem), Gibeath, and Kirjath: fourteen cities with their villages. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin according to their families.

2. (19:1-9) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Simeon.

The second lot came out for Simeon, for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families. And their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah. They had in their inheritance Beersheba (Sheba), Moladah, Hazar Shual, Balah, Ezem, Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah, Ziklag, Beth Marcaboth, Hazar Susah, Beth Lebaoth, and Sharuhem: thirteen cities and their villages; Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan: four cities and their villages; and all the villages that were all around these cities as far as Baalath Beer, Ramah of the South. This was the

inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families. The inheritance of the children of Simeon *was included* in the share of the children of Judah, for the share of the children of Judah was too much for them. Therefore the children of Simeon had *their* inheritance within the inheritance of that people.

3. (10-16) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Zebulun.

The third lot came out for the children of Zebulun according to their families, and the border of their inheritance was as far as Sarid. Their border went toward the west and to Maralah, went to Dabbasheth, and extended along the brook that is east of Jokneam. Then from Sarid it went eastward toward the sunrise along the border of Chisloth Tabor, and went out toward Daberath, bypassing Japhia. And from there it passed along on the east of Gath Hepher, toward Eth Kazin, and extended to Rimmon, which borders on Neah. Then the border went around it on the north side of Hannathon, and it ended in the Valley of Jiphthah El. Included were Kattath, Nahallal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem: twelve cities with their villages. This was the inheritance of the children of Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages.

4. (17-23) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Issachar.

The fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of Issachar according to their families. And their territory went to Jezreel, and *included* Chesulloth, Shunem, Haphraim, Shion, Anaharath, Rabbith, Kishion, Abez, Remeth, En Gannim, En Haddah, and Beth Pazzez. And the border reached to Tabor,

Shahazimah, and Beth Shemesh; their border ended at the Jordan: sixteen cities with their villages. This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar according to their families, the cities and their villages.

5. (24-31) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Asher.

The fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families. And their territory included Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, Alammelech, Amad, and Mishal; it reached to Mount Carmel westward, along *the Brook* Shihor Libnath. It turned toward the sunrise to Beth Dagon; and it reached to Zebulun and to the Valley of Jiphthah El, then northward beyond Beth Emek and Neiel, bypassing Cabul *which* was on the left, including Ebron, Rehob, Hammon, and Kanah, as far as Greater Sidon. And the border turned to Ramah and to the fortified city of Tyre; then the border turned to Hosah, and ended at the sea by the region of Achzib. Also Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob *were included*: twenty-two cities with their villages. This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.

6. (32-39) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Naphtali.

The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali, for the children of Naphtali according to their families. And their border began at Heleph, enclosing the territory from the terebinth tree in Zaanannim, Adami Nekeb, and Jabneel, as far as Lakkum; it ended at the Jordan. From Heleph the border extended westward to Aznoth Tabor, and went out from there toward Hukkok; it adjoined Zebulun on the south side and Asher on the west side, and ended at Judah by the

Jordan toward the sunrise. And the fortified cities *are* Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth, Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, Kedesh, Edrei, En Hazor, Iron, Migdal El, Horem, Beth Anath, and Beth Shemesh: nineteen cities with their villages. This *was* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali according to their families, the cities and their villages.

7. (40-48) The boundaries and cities for the tribe of Dan.

The seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families. And the territory of their inheritance was Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir Shemesh, Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Jethlah, Elon, Timnah, Ekron, Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, Jehud, Bene Berak, Gath Rimmon, Me Jarkon, and Rakkon, with the region near Joppa. And the border of the children of Dan went beyond these, because the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem and took it; and they struck it with the edge of the sword, took possession of it, and dwelt in it. They called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father. This *is* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.

8. (49-51) Joshua's inheritance.

When they had made an end of dividing the land as an inheritance according to their borders, the children of Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua the son of Nun. According to the word of the LORD they gave him the city which he asked for, Timnath Serah in the mountains of Ephraim; and he built the city and dwelt in it. These *were* the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel divided as an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the

LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. So they made an end of dividing the country.

a. When they had made an end of dividing the land:

Joshua received what was promised to him by God, but in remarkable humility, he receives his portion last. This is the kind of humble service and concern for others that makes Joshua such a wonderful picture of Jesus Christ.

The Cities of Refuge

Jos 20:1 Then the LORD told Joshua

Jos 20:2 to say to the people of Israel, "Choose the cities of refuge that I had Moses tell you about.

Jos 20:3 If any of you accidentally kills someone, you can go there and escape the one who is looking for revenge.

Jos 20:4 You can run away to one of these cities, go to the place of judgment at the entrance to the city, and explain to the leaders what happened. Then they will let you into the city and give you a place to live in, so that you can stay there.

Jos 20:5 If the one looking for revenge follows you there, the people of the city must not hand you over to that one. They must protect you because you killed the person accidentally and not out of anger.

Jos 20:6 You may stay in the city until you have received a public trial and until the death of the man who is then the High Priest. Then you may go back home to your own town, from which you had run away."

Jos 20:7 So, on the west side of the Jordan they set aside Kedesh in Galilee, in the hill country of Naphtali; Shechem, in the hill country of Ephraim; and Hebron, in the hill country of Judah.

Jos 20:8 East of the Jordan, on the desert plateau east of Jericho, they chose Bezer in the territory of Reuben;

Ramoth in Gilead, in the territory of Gad; and Golan in Bashan, in the territory of Manasseh.

Jos 20:9 These were the cities of refuge chosen for all the people of Israel and for any foreigner living among them. Any who killed a person accidentally could find protection there from the one looking for revenge; they could not be killed unless they had first received a public trial.

Joshua 20:1-9

Joshua 20 - The Cities of Refuge

A. God commands the appointment of six cities of refuge.

1. (1-3) *A place of refuge from the avenger of blood.*

The LORD also spoke to Joshua, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'Appoint for yourselves cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, that the slayer who kills a person accidentally or unintentionally may flee there; and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.'"

a. **Appoint for yourselves cities of refuge:** God now tells Joshua to fulfill what the LORD had commanded through Moses in Numbers 35 - the appointment of six cities of refuge.

b. **That the slayer who kills a person accidentally or unintentionally may flee there:** The purpose of the cities of refuge was to protect **the slayer who kills any person accidentally or unintentionally**. They were to protect someone in the case of *manslaughter* as opposed to *murder*.

c. **And they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood:** Such a person needed protection against the **avenger of blood**. The Hebrew word for this phrase is *goel*, and in this context means the representative from

the victim's family charged with making sure justice is carried out against the murderer of the family member.

i. God had a passion to make sure that murderers were punished in ancient Israel, and in that culture, the final responsibility for justice rested with the designated *goel* (**avenger of blood**) in the family.

ii. The principle for capital punishment goes back to Gen 9:6 : *Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.* The state's right to use the sword of execution is also stated in the New Testament (Rom 13:3-4).

iii. God said also that unpunished murderers defiled the land: *Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death... So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.* (Num 35:31; Num 35:33-34).

iv. How long will our nation be polluted by the stain of unpunished murders? Not too many years ago, over one year in Los Angeles County, they averaged *more than five murders a day*. The blood of the slain cries out before God.

d. **Refuge from the avenger of blood:** The **avenger of blood** tracked down the murderer, and if necessary, delivered him over to the authorities for execution. This was providing the testimony of two or three eyewitnesses could confirm the guilt of the murderer according to Deu 17:6-7.

e. **Refuge from the avenger of blood:** Since the **avenger of blood** might set himself against a person really guilty of manslaughter (accidental or unintentional killing) instead of murder, the cities of refuge were established to protect the person innocent of murder.

2. (4) *Entrance into the city of refuge.*

And when he flees to one of those cities, and stands at the entrance of the gate of the city, and declares his case in the hearing of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city as one of them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.

a. **And declares his case in the hearing of the elders of that city:** According to custom, the elders of the city spent much time at the gates of the city. When someone fleeing from an avenger of blood came to a city of refuge, he stated his case to the elders at the city gates.

b. **They shall take him into the city as one of them:** After explaining the case, the fleeing person could expect to find protection within the walls of the city of refuge, though he would have to stay there, and live in the city, to enjoy that protection.

3. (5) *Protection against the avenger of blood.*

Then if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not deliver the slayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor unintentionally, but did not hate him beforehand.

a. **They shall not deliver the slayer into his hand:** The leaders of a city of refuge were obliged to protect the one who had fled to the city. The **avenger of blood** had no legal standing to deliver the slayer over to execution.

b. **Because he struck his neighbor unintentionally, but did not hate him beforehand:** Israel had a sophisticated legal system, with judgments often based on intent and premeditation.

4. (6) *Freedom for the slayer.*

And he shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the slayer may return and come to his own city and his own house, to the city from which he fled.

a. **He shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the one who is high priest in those days:** To be protected against the avenger of blood, the slayer had to stay within the walls of the city of refuge until his case was fully heard by the proper authorities, and until the death of the standing high priest.

b. **Then the slayer may return and come to his own city:** After being declared innocent of murder by the proper authorities, and after the death of the standing high priest, the slayer could go back to his home and be protected against the wrath of the avenger of blood.

B. Six cities selected for cities of refuge.

1. (7-8) *The appointment of six cities.*

So they appointed Kedesh in Galilee, in the mountains of Naphtali, Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and Kirjath Arba (which is Hebron) in the mountains of Judah. And on the other side of the Jordan, by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness on the plain, from the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh.

a. **So they appointed:** On a map, we see that the cities of refuge were well spaced throughout the country. No matter where you were in Israel, you were not very far from a city of refuge.

b. **They assigned:** Deu 19:2 tells us that proper roads were to be built and maintained to these cities of refuge. The city was not much good to the slayer if they could not get to it quickly.

2. (9) *The purpose for the cities of refuge is again stated.*

These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwelt among them, that whoever killed a person accidentally might flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stood before the congregation.

a. **For all the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwelt among them:** The cities of refuge were not only for the benefit of the Israelite, but also for the **stranger who sojourned among them**. God's justice applied to all without partiality.

3. *The cities of refuge as a picture of Jesus.*

a. The Bible applies this picture of the city of refuge to the believer finding refuge in God on more than one occasion:

i. Psa 46:1 : *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.* More than 15 other times, the Psalms speak of God as our refuge.

ii. Heb 6:18 : *That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*

b. Points of similarity between the cities of refuge and our refuge in Jesus.

- Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are *within easy reach* of the needy person; they were of no use unless someone could get to the place of refuge.
 - Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are *open to all*, not just the Israelite; no one needs to fear that they would be turned away from their place of refuge in their time of need.
 - Both Jesus and the cities of refuge became a place where the one in need would *live*; you didn't come to a city of refuge in time of need just to look around.
 - Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are the *only alternative* for the one in need; without this specific protection, they will be destroyed.
 - Both Jesus and the cities of refuge provide protection *only within their boundaries*; to go outside means death.
 - With both Jesus and the cities of refuge, full freedom comes with the *death of the High Priest*.
- c. A crucial distinction between the cities of refuge and our refuge in Jesus.
- The cities of refuge only helped the *innocent*, but the *guilty* can come to Jesus and find refuge.

Cities and Pasturelands Allotted to Levi

Jos 21:1 The leaders of the Levite families went to Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and to the heads of the families of all the tribes of Israel.

Jos 21:2 There at Shiloh in the land of Canaan they said to them, "The LORD commanded through Moses that we were to be given cities to live in, as well as pasture land around them for our livestock."

Jos 21:3 So in accordance with the LORD's command the people of Israel gave the Levites certain cities and pasture lands out of their own territories.

Jos 21:4 The families of the Levite clan of Kohath were the first to be assigned cities. The families who were descended from Aaron the priest were assigned thirteen cities from the territories of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin.

Jos 21:5 The rest of the clan of Kohath was assigned ten cities from the territories of Ephraim, Dan, and West Manasseh.

Jos 21:6 The clan of Gershon was assigned thirteen cities from the territories of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and East Manasseh.

Jos 21:7 The families of the clan of Merari were assigned twelve cities from the territories of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

Jos 21:8 By drawing lots, the people of Israel assigned these cities and their pasture lands to the Levites, as the LORD had commanded through Moses.

Jos 21:9 These are the names of the cities from the territories of Judah and Simeon which were given

Jos 21:10 to the descendants of Aaron who were of the clan of Kohath, which was descended from Levi. Their assignment was the first to be made.

Jos 21:11 They were given the city of Arba (Arba was Anak's father), now called Hebron, in the hill country of Judah, along with the pasture land surrounding it.

Jos 21:12 However, the fields of the city, as well as its towns, had already been given to Caleb son of Jephunneh as his possession.

Jos 21:13 In addition to Hebron (one of the cities of refuge), the following cities were assigned to the descendants of Aaron the priest: Libnah,

Jos 21:14 Jattir, Eshtemoa,

Jos 21:15 Holon, Debir,

Jos 21:16 Ain, Juttah, and Beth Shemesh, with their pasture lands: nine cities from the tribes of Judah and

Simeon.

Jos 21:17 From the territory of Benjamin they were given four cities: Gibeon, Geba,

Jos 21:18 Anathoth, and Almon, with their pasture lands.

Jos 21:19 Thirteen cities in all, with their pasture lands, were given to the priests, the descendants of Aaron.

Jos 21:20 The other families of the Levite clan of Kohath were assigned some cities from the territory of Ephraim.

Jos 21:21 They were given four cities: Shechem and its pasture lands in the hill country of Ephraim (one of the cities of refuge), Gezer,

Jos 21:22 Kibzaim, and Beth Horon, with their pasture lands.

Jos 21:23 From the territory of Dan they were given four cities: Eltekeh, Gibbethon,

Jos 21:24 Aijalon, and Gathrimmon, with their pasture lands.

Jos 21:25 From the territory of West Manasseh they were given two cities: Taanach and Gathrimmon, with their pasture lands.

Jos 21:26 These families of the clan of Kohath received ten cities in all, with their pasture lands.

Jos 21:27 Another group of Levites, the clan of Gershon, received from the territory of East Manasseh two cities: Golan in Bashan (one of the cities of refuge) and Beeshterah, with their pasture lands.

Jos 21:28 From the territory of Issachar they received four cities: Kishion, Daberath,

Jos 21:29 Jarmuth, and Engannim, with their pasture lands.

Jos 21:30 From the territory of Asher they received four cities: Mishal, Abdon,

Jos 21:31 Helkath, and Rehob, with their pasture lands.

Jos 21:32 From the territory of Naphtali they received three cities: Kedesh in Galilee, with its pasture lands (one of the cities of refuge), Hammoth Dor, and Kartan, with their pasture lands.

Jos 21:33 The various families of the clan of Gershon received a total of thirteen cities with their pasture lands.

Jos 21:34 The rest of the Levites, the clan of Merari, received from the territory of Zebulun four cities: Jokneam, Kartah,

Jos 21:35 Dimnah, and Nahalal, with their pasture lands.

Jos 21:36 From the territory of Reuben they received four cities: Bezer, Jahaz,

Jos 21:37 Kedemoth, and Mephaath, with their pasture lands.

Jos 21:38 From the tribe of Gad they received four cities: Ramoth in Gilead, with its pasture lands (one of the cities of refuge), Mahanaim,

Jos 21:39 Heshbon, and Jazer, with their pasture lands.

Jos 21:40 So the clan of Merari was assigned a total of twelve cities.

Jos 21:41 (41-42) From the land that the people of Israel possessed, a total of forty-eight cities, with the pasture lands around them, was given to the Levites.

Jos 21:43 So the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he had solemnly promised their ancestors he would give them. When they had taken possession of it, they settled down there.

Jos 21:44 The LORD gave them peace throughout the land, just as he had promised their ancestors. Not one of all their enemies had been able to stand against them, because the LORD gave the Israelites the victory over all their enemies.

Jos 21:45 The LORD kept every one of the promises that he had made to the people of Israel.

Joshua 21:1-45

Joshua 21 - Cities Appointed for the Levites

A. The people of the tribe of Levi receive their cities with their common lands.

1. (1-3) The leaders of the tribe of Levi ask for what was promised to them.

Then the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites came near to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the children of Israel. And they spoke to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, "The LORD commanded through Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with their common-lands for our livestock." So the children of Israel gave to the Levites from their inheritance, at the commandment of the LORD, these cities and their common-lands:

a. The LORD commanded through Moses to give us cities to dwell in: The Levites received no "province" of land such as the other tribes did; however, they had to live somewhere. So, each tribe gave certain **cities** and **common-lands** (land immediately surrounding the cities) to the tribe of Levi.

b. So the children of Israel gave to the Levites from their inheritance: The tribe of Levi had no "province" of land because God had declared that He would be their inheritance (Jos 13:14; Jos 13:33).

2. (4-42) Cities are appointed to the Levites, according to their three main family divisions.

Now the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites. And the children of Aaron the priest, who were of the Levites, had thirteen cities by lot from the tribe of Judah, from the tribe of Simeon, and from the

tribe of Benjamin. The rest of the children of Kohath had ten cities by lot from the families of the tribe of Ephraim, from the tribe of Dan, and from the half-tribe of Manasseh. And the children of Gershon had thirteen cities by lot from the families of the tribe of Issachar, from the tribe of Asher, from the tribe of Naphtali, and from the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan. The children of Merari according to their families had twelve cities from the tribe of Reuben, from the tribe of Gad, and from the tribe of Zebulun. And the children of Israel gave these cities with their common-lands by lot to the Levites, as the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses. So they gave from the tribe of the children of Judah and from the tribe of the children of Simeon these cities which are designated by name, which were for the children of Aaron, one of the families of the Kohathites, *who were* of the children of Levi; for the lot was theirs first. And they gave them Kirjath Arba (*Arba was* the father of Anak), which *is* Hebron, in the mountains of Judah, with the common-land surrounding it. But the fields of the city and its villages they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as his possession. Thus to the children of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron with its common-land (a city of refuge for the slayer), Libnah with its common-land, Jattir with its common-land, Eshtemoa with its common-land, Holon with its common-land, Debir with its common-land, Ain with its common-land, Juttah with its common-land, and Beth Shemesh with its common-land: nine cities from those two tribes; and from the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with its common-land, Geba with its common-land, Anathoth with its common-land, and Almon with its common-land: four cities. All the cities of the children of Aaron, the priests, *were* thirteen cities with their common-lands. And the families of the

children of Kohath, the Levites, the rest of the children of Kohath, even they had the cities of their lot from the tribe of Ephraim. For they gave them Shechem with its common-land in the mountains of Ephraim (a city of refuge for the slayer), Gezer with its common-land, Kibzaim with its common-land, and Beth Horon with its common-land: four cities; and from the tribe of Dan, Eltekeh with its common-land, Gibbethon with its common-land, Aijalon with its common-land, *and* Gath Rimmon with its common-land: four cities; and from the half-tribe of Manasseh, Tanach with its common-land and Gath Rimmon with its common-land: two cities. All the ten cities with their common-lands were for the rest of the families of the children of Kohath. Also to the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, from the *other* half-tribe of Manasseh, *they gave* Golan in Bashan with its common-land (a city of refuge for the slayer), and Be Eshterah with its common-land: two cities; and from the tribe of Issachar, Kishion with its common-land, Daberath with its common-land, Jarmuth with its common-land, *and* En Gannim with its common-land: four cities; and from the tribe of Asher, Mishal with its common-land, Abdon with its common-land, Helkath with its common-land, and Rehob with its common-land: four cities; and from the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with its common-land (a city of refuge for the slayer), Hammoth Dor with its common-land, and Kartan with its common-land: three cities. All the cities of the Gershonites according to their families *were* thirteen cities with their common-lands. And to the families of the children of Merari, the rest of the Levites, from the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with its common-land, Kartah with its common-land, Dimnah with its common-land, *and* Nahalal with its common-land:

four cities; and from the tribe of Reuben, Bezer with its common-land, Jahaz with its common-land, Kedemoth with its common-land, and Mephaath with its common-land: four cities; and from the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in Gilead with its common-land (a city of refuge for the slayer), Mahanaim with its common-land, Heshbon with its common-land, *and* Jazer with its common-land: four cities in all. So all the cities for the children of Merari according to their families, the rest of the families of the Levites, were *by* their lot twelve cities. All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel *were* forty-eight cities with their common-lands. Every one of these cities had its common-land surrounding it; thus *were* all these cities.

a. **Now the lot came out:** The striking thing about this list is that God wanted the Levites “sprinkled” all throughout the land of Israel. He never intended there to be one “state” of Levi, but every tribe was to have the priestly influence and presence in their midst.

i. In the same manner, Christians (being priests, 1Pe 2:5; 1Pe 2:9) are to be “sprinkled” all throughout the world and society, instead of heading off to make a “Christian country” somewhere.

b. **All the cities of the Levites:** Perhaps it is also significant that the priests received their cities last of all the tribes. Priests are appointed to serve, not to be served, and there is something priestly about letting others go first.

B. Israel takes full possession of the land.

1. (43) *The land is Israel's, given to them by God.*

So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took

possession of it and dwelt in it.

a. **So the LORD gave to Israel all the land:** All the tribes had their land. They must go into every corner of what God has given, and take full possession, but God had provided everything necessary for them to do so.

2. (44) *The rest in the land is Israel's, given to them by God.*

The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.

a. **The LORD gave them rest all around:** This is the point where Israel stopped commemorating Passover as if equipped to travel as described in Exo 12:11). Now they will eat the Passover reclining at rest (as described in Joh 13:23), because the LORD had given them rest in the land.

3. (45) *Not a word of God fails.*

Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.

a. **Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken:** God was completely faithful in regard to the land; but Israel was not. Any failure to fully possess was not because God had not made adequate provision, but because Israel had failed to fully follow the LORD.

b. **All came to pass:** God has been completely faithful to you and made provision for continual victory. He has given greatly unto you, but what do you possess?

i. "In the light of the Cross, is it not true that the enemy has no right to dwell in the land? Is it not true that Satan's claim to your life was taken from him at

Calvary? Is it not true that sin has no right to a foothold in the life of the child of God? Is it not true that Satan has no power in the presence of Omnipotence? Is it not true that by virtue of His blood and His resurrection, Jesus Christ is pledged to destroy the enemy utterly? Is it not true that in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit there is strength for every temptation, grace for every trial, power to overcome every difficulty?" (Alan Redpath)

The Eastern Tribes Return Home

Jos 22:1 Then Joshua called together the people of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh.

Jos 22:2 He said to them, "You have done everything that Moses the LORD's servant ordered you to do, and you have obeyed all my commands.

Jos 22:3 All this time you have never once deserted the other Israelites. You have been careful to obey the commands of the LORD your God.

Jos 22:4 Now, as he promised, the LORD your God has given the other Israelites peace. So go back home to the land which you claimed for your own, the land on the east side of the Jordan, that Moses, the LORD's servant, gave you.

Jos 22:5 Make sure you obey the law that Moses commanded you: love the LORD your God, do his will, obey his commandments, be faithful to him, and serve him with all your heart and soul."

Jos 22:6 (6-8) Joshua sent them home with his blessing and with these words: "You are going back home very rich, with a lot of livestock, silver, gold, bronze, iron, and many clothes. Share with your fellow tribesmen what you took from your enemies." Then they left for home. Moses had given land east of the Jordan to one half of the tribe of

Manasseh, but to the other half Joshua had given land west of the Jordan, along with the other tribes.

Jos 22:9 So the people of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh went back home. They left the rest of the people of Israel at Shiloh in the land of Canaan and started out for their own land, the land of Gilead, which they had taken as the LORD had commanded them through Moses.

The Eastern Tribes' Altar of Witness

Jos 22:10 When the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh arrived at Geliloth, still on the west side of the Jordan, they built a large, impressive altar there by the river.

Jos 22:11 The rest of the people of Israel were told, "Listen! The people of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh have built an altar at Geliloth, on our side of the Jordan!"

Jos 22:12 When the people of Israel heard this, the whole community came together at Shiloh to go to war against the eastern tribes.

Jos 22:13 Then the people of Israel sent Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, to the people of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh in the land of Gilead.

Jos 22:14 Ten leading men went with Phinehas, one from each of the western tribes and each one the head of a family among the clans.

Jos 22:15 They came to the land of Gilead, to the people of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh,

Jos 22:16 and speaking for the whole community of the LORD, they said to them, "Why have you done this evil thing against the God of Israel? You have rebelled against the LORD by building this altar for yourselves! You are no longer following him!"

Jos 22:17 Remember our sin at Peor, when the LORD punished his own people with an epidemic? We are still suffering because of that. Wasn't that sin enough?

Jos 22:18 Are you going to refuse to follow him now? If you rebel against the LORD today, he will be angry with everyone in Israel tomorrow.

Jos 22:19 Now then, if your land is not fit to worship in, come over into the LORD's land, where his Tent is. Claim some land among us. But don't rebel against the LORD or make rebels out of us by building an altar in addition to the altar of the LORD our God.

Jos 22:20 Remember how Achan son of Zerah refused to obey the command about the things condemned to destruction; the whole community of Israel was punished for that. Achan was not the only one who died because of his sin."

Jos 22:21 The people of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh answered the heads of the families of the western tribes:

Jos 22:22 "The Mighty One is God! He is the LORD! The Mighty One is God! He is the LORD! He knows why we did this, and we want you to know too! If we rebelled and did not keep faith with the LORD, do not let us live any longer!

Jos 22:23 If we disobeyed the LORD and built our own altar to burn sacrifices on or to use for grain offerings or fellowship offerings, let the LORD himself punish us.

Jos 22:24 No! We did it because we were afraid that in the future your descendants would say to ours, 'What do you have to do with the LORD, the God of Israel?

Jos 22:25 He made the Jordan a boundary between us and you people of Reuben and Gad. You have nothing to do with the LORD.' Then your descendants might make our descendants stop worshiping the LORD.

Jos 22:26 So we built an altar, not to burn sacrifices or make offerings,

Jos 22:27 but instead, as a sign for our people and yours, and for the generations after us, that we do indeed worship the LORD before his sacred Tent with our offerings to be burned and with sacrifices and fellowship offerings. This was to keep your descendants from saying that ours have nothing to do with the LORD.

Jos 22:28 It was our idea that, if this should ever happen, our descendants could say, 'Look! Our ancestors made an altar just like the LORD's altar. It was not for burning offerings or for sacrifice, but as a sign for our people and yours.'

Jos 22:29 We would certainly not rebel against the LORD or stop following him now by building an altar to burn offerings on or for grain offerings or sacrifices. We would not build any other altar than the altar of the LORD our God that stands in front of the Tent of his presence."

Jos 22:30 Phinehas the priest and the ten leading men of the community who were with him, the heads of families of the western tribes, heard what the people of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh had to say, and they were satisfied.

Jos 22:31 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, said to them, "Now we know that the LORD is with us. You have not rebelled against him, and so you have saved the people of Israel from the LORD's punishment."

Jos 22:32 Then Phinehas and the leaders left the people of Reuben and Gad in the land of Gilead and went back to Canaan, to the people of Israel, and reported to them.

Jos 22:33 The Israelites were satisfied and praised God. They no longer talked about going to war to devastate the land where the people of Reuben and Gad had settled.

Jos 22:34 The people of Reuben and Gad said, "This altar is a witness to all of us that the LORD is God." And so they named it "Witness."

Joshua 22:1-34

Joshua 22 - A Misunderstanding Reconciled

A. The armies from the tribes east of the Jordan are sent home.

1. (1-4) *Joshua thanks them for a job well done.*

Then Joshua called the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, and said to them: "You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you. You have not left your brethren these many days, up to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brethren, as He promised them; now therefore, return and go to your tents *and* to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan."

a. **You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you:** In the seven years they had been with Joshua, helping the tribes west of the Jordan to conquer their enemies, they had been completely obedient and helpful to Joshua.

b. **You have not left your brethren these many days:** They had gone out and fought on behalf of their brethren, even though they already had their own inheritance - even as God commanded them to do.

c. **Now therefore, return and go to your tents and to the land of your possession:** Now that the land was conquered and fully distributed to the tribes, they

could go back to their families and lands on the eastern side of the Jordan.

2. (5-6) *Before they leave, Joshua gives them an exhortation and a blessing.*

“But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.” So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.

a. **But take careful heed to do the commandment:** He tells them to **take diligent heed** to the word of God, probably here mostly in the sense of carefully hearing it and knowing it.

b. **To love the LORD your God:** He tells them to **love** the *LORD*. This is a matter of the heart, but it can still be commanded.

c. **To walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments:** He tells them to obey God with all they have, to **keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him** in a personal sense, and to **serve Him** with all your heart and soul.

i. We should not miss the order here. First, we should take care to *hear* God. Then we give Him our *love*. Next comes a walk of *obedience*. To mix this order up is to get off into heresy (loving without hearing) or legalism (obeying before loving).

d. **So Joshua blessed them and sent them away:** Joshua will not send them away without a blessing; he knew that they could not do or be what God wanted them to be without His blessing among them.

i. Perhaps he used the blessing from Num 6:23-27 : *Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."' So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.*

3. (7-9) *The armies of the two and a half tribes depart, with much spoil.*

Now to half the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan, but to the *other* half of it Joshua gave a *possession* among their brethren on this side of the Jordan, westward. And indeed, when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them, and spoke to them, saying, "Return with much riches to your tents, with very much livestock, with silver, with gold, with bronze, with iron, and with very much clothing. Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren." So the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel at Shiloh, which *is* in the land of Canaan, to go to the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, which they had obtained according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

a. **Return with much riches to your tents:** Their obedience to God and faithfulness to their brethren has been rewarded. God has allowed them to gain much plunder that they can take back home with them.

i. We believe that when we obey God, we will be gainers, not losers. Perhaps not always in this obvious material sense, but in real, wonderful gains none the less.

b. **So the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel at Shiloh:** We might imagine that this was a somewhat emotional departure of brothers who had known the closeness of fighting side-by-side. These were true veterans of the army of Israel.

B. The incident of the altar by the Jordan.

1. *(10) The eastern tribes make an impressive altar.*

And when they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan; a great, impressive altar.

a. **When they came to the region of the Jordan:** Before crossing over the Jordan, the soldiers from the two and a half tribes build a **great, impressive altar** near the Jordan River.

b. **A great, impressive altar:** This was significant not only because of its size, but because of the *meaning* of an altar. An altar was a place of sacrifice, and both the Israelites and pagans had altars they used for sacrifice.

2. *(11-12) The tribes west of the Jordan river learn of the great altar.*

Now the children of Israel heard someone say, "Behold, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar on the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan; on the children of Israel's side." And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh to go to war against them.

a. **Behold, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar:** When the news comes to the rest of Israel, there was no discussion, there was a simple reaction. They gathered to make war against their own brothers who built this altar.

i. Notice that Joshua does not need to gather them, they gather of own accord. It was an automatic reaction.

b. **The children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh:** Why did they do this? Because they feared that this altar was a sign of allegiance to the pagan gods of the region.

c. **To go to war against them:** Their readiness to fight this battle shows great courage to confront on behalf of God's truth and holiness. This was a healthy "body," able to purge itself of poisons.

i. Their later actions show that they are not *happy* about taking this action, nor will they do it *rashly* - *but they will do it!*

3. (13-15) Before action is taken, Phinehas the High Priest, and representatives from each tribe west of the Jordan personally confront the leaders of the tribes east of the Jordan.

Then the children of Israel sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, and with him ten rulers, one ruler each from the chief house of every tribe of Israel; and each one was the head of the house of his father among the divisions of Israel. Then they came to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and

to half the tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them, saying,

a. **Then the children of Israel sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest:** Phinehas led the group, because he had the authority. He was High Priest over the whole nation, including the two and one-half tribes on the east side of the Jordan. He not only had the authority, he also had the heart of a wise shepherd. He wanted to correct the erring, to protect the nation, and to drive out the dangerous.

b. **And they spoke with them:** Israel reacted according to God's character. Their assembling for war demonstrated God's holiness, but their personal confrontation demonstrated God's love.

4. (16-18) Phinehas brings the accusation against the eastern tribes.

Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD: "What treachery is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that you have built for yourselves an altar, that you might rebel this day against the LORD? Is the iniquity of Peor not enough for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD, but that you must turn away this day from following the LORD? And it shall be, if you rebel today against the LORD, that tomorrow He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel."

a. **What treachery is this:** Clearly, they thought that the altar at the Jordan represented a *rival* place of sacrifice and worship, to compete with God's tabernacle, presently at Shiloh.

i. God had clearly commanded that there was one place of sacrifice and burnt offerings for Israel: *Also you shall say to them: Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to offer it to the LORD, that man shall be cut off from among his people.* (Lev 17:8-9)

ii. We understand from this that we cannot worship God any way we please, or justify a manner of worship just because we like it. First and always, our worship must be pleasing to God. We must worship Him in *spirit* and in *truth*. (Joh 4:24)

b. Is the iniquity of Peor not enough for us:

Phinehas reminds the eastern tribes that Israel has been punished for rebellion against God before, using the rebellion at **Peor** as an example.

i. At Peor, Israel's men had sex with Moabite women, and they gave themselves over to the worship of the Moabite gods. In judgment, God sent a plague that killed 24,000 people.

ii. This incident would be especially meaningful to Phinehas, because he was the one who stopped the plague by making a dramatic stand for righteousness in the midst of gross sin.

c. He will be angry with the whole congregation:

Phinehas also knew that the sin of these tribes would reflect on the whole nation. He knew that no one really sins unto himself.

5. (19) *A willingness to sacrifice to keep a brother from sin.*

Nevertheless, if the land of your possession is unclean, then cross over to the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD's tabernacle stands,

and take possession among us; but do not rebel against the LORD, nor rebel against us, by building yourselves an altar besides the altar of the LORD our God.

a. **Take possession among us:** To Phinehas, *anything* was better than seeing these tribes go off in rebellion against God. If there was something **unclean** in their land, he invited them to come and live with the tribes on the western side of the Jordan.

b. **Do not rebel against the LORD, nor rebel against us, by building yourselves an altar:** This was an invitation made at great cost. It would have meant a much smaller area of land for the western tribes. But it didn't matter, because they were willing to *sacrifice* to see their brothers free from this sin.

i. Too many of us lack this willingness; we tell people to stop sinning, but are not willing to help them if it costs us something.

6. (20) *A second example of the price of sin: the sin of Achan and its affect on all of Israel is remembered.*

Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.

7. (21-23) *The eastern tribes respond.*

Then the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh answered and said to the heads of the divisions of Israel: "The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, He knows, and let Israel itself know; if *it is* in rebellion, or if in treachery against the LORD, do not save us this day. If we have built ourselves an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer on it burnt offerings or grain

offerings, or if to offer peace offerings on it, let the LORD Himself require *an account*."

a. **The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, He knows:** They first appeal to God, because He knows for certain their hearts, and they believe that their brothers in the western tribes have misunderstood them.

i. When we are misunderstood, our first refuge is God. He knows our heart, and we must be satisfied with being right before God even if it means we are wrong in the eyes of some others.

b. **If it is in rebellion, or if in treachery against the LORD, do not save us this day:** They also recognized the rightness of what the others were doing in coming against them.

i. The eastern tribes do what we should all do when we are misunderstood: put ourselves in the shoes of the other person and try to see what they see. If we saw what they saw, we might respond in the same way.

8. (24-29) The eastern tribes explain their true reason for building the altar: it was built as a memorial, not as a place of sacrifice.

"But in fact we have done it for fear, for a reason, saying, 'In time to come your descendants may speak to our descendants, saying, "What have you to do with the LORD God of Israel? For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between you and us, *you* children of Reuben and children of Gad. You have no part in the LORD." So your descendants would make our descendants cease fearing the LORD.' Therefore we said, 'Let us now prepare to build ourselves an altar, not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice, but *that it may be a witness between you and us and our generations*

after us, that we may perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your descendants may not say to our descendants in time to come, "You have no part in the LORD." Therefore we said that it will be, when they say *this* to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say, 'Here is the replica of the altar of the LORD which our fathers made, though not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifices; but it *is* a witness between you and us.' Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn from following the LORD this day, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for grain offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the LORD our God which *is* before His tabernacle."

a. **An altar, not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice, but that it may be a witness:** The eastern tribes recognized their distance from the center of worship in Israel, and that there was a natural barrier (the Jordan River) between them and the rest of the nation. So they built the altar a memorial to link the two segments of the nation.

b. **That your descendants may not say to our descendants in time to come:** They built it so big and impressive so that it would last. They wanted it to stand as a memorial to future generations that the tribes on both sides of the Jordan worshipped the same God.

c. **Here is the replica of the altar of the LORD which our fathers made, though not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifices:** The eastern tribes again *agree with the concern* of the western tribes; but they explain that the western tribes have misunderstood the meaning of the great, impressive altar.

9. (30-31) *The explanation of the eastern tribes is accepted by the western tribes.*

Now when Phinehas the priest and the rulers of the congregation, the heads of the divisions of Israel who were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them. Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh, "This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because you have not committed this treachery against the LORD. Now you have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD."

a. **Now when Phinehas the priest... heard the words... it pleased them:** Obviously, Phinehas is pleased by this explanation; yet he deserves credit for being willing to believe his brothers. Phinehas puts himself in the shoes of the eastern tribes now, and so the explanation makes sense.

b. **This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because you have not committed this treachery against the LORD:** Phinehas could see that the **LORD was among us**, because unity had been restored among the people of Israel. This fulfilled the passage from Psa 133:1 : *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

10. (32-34) *Epilogue: the matter is resolved.*

And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the rulers, returned from the children of Reuben and the children of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought back word to them. So the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God; they spoke no more of going against them in battle, to

destroy the land where the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt. The children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar, *Witness*, "For *it is* a witness between us that the LORD *is* God."

a. **So the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God:** Everyone is glad, and everyone enjoys the blessing of having peace among the people of God.

b. **The children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar, *Witness*:** The altar is given the name **Witness**, because it was a witness to the tribes on both the eastern side and the western side of the Jordan **that the LORD is God.**

i. We should respond to misunderstanding in the same manner, according to these same principles.

- Respond with a concern for God's holiness.
- Respond with the courage to confront in love.
- Respond with an attempt to reconcile before you fight.
- Determine that you are willing to sacrifice to help them; don't confront unless you are willing to help.
- Determine that you will see the situation from the perspective of the other person.
- Determine that you will believe the best of one another.

Joshua's Charge to Israel's Leaders

Jos 23:1 Much later the LORD gave Israel security from their enemies around them. By that time Joshua was very old,

Jos 23:2 so he called all Israel, the elders, leaders, judges, and officers of the people, and said, "I am very old now.

Jos 23:3 You have seen everything that the LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you. The LORD your God has been fighting for you.

Jos 23:4 I have assigned as the possession of your tribes the land of the nations that are still left, as well as of all the nations that I have already conquered, from the Jordan River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west.

Jos 23:5 The LORD your God will make them retreat from you, and he will drive them away as you advance. You shall have their land, as the LORD your God has promised you.

Jos 23:6 So be careful to obey and do everything that is written in the book of the Law of Moses. Do not neglect any part of it,

Jos 23:7 and then you will not associate with these peoples left among you or speak the names of their gods or use those names in taking vows or worship those gods or bow down to them.

Jos 23:8 Instead, be faithful to the LORD, as you have been till now.

Jos 23:9 The LORD has driven great and powerful nations out as you advanced, and no one has ever been able to stand against you.

Jos 23:10 Any one of you can make a thousand men run away, because the LORD your God is fighting for you, just as he promised.

Jos 23:11 Be careful, then, to love the LORD your God.

Jos 23:12 If you are disloyal and join with the nations that are still left among you and intermarry with them,

Jos 23:13 you may be sure that the LORD your God will no longer drive these nations out as you advance. Rather, they will be as dangerous for you as a trap or a pit and as painful as a whip on your back or thorns in your eyes. And this will last until none of you are left in this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

Jos 23:14 "Now my time has come to die. Every one of you knows in his heart and soul that the LORD your God has given you all the good things that he promised. Every promise he made has been kept; not one has failed.

Jos 23:15 But just as he kept every promise that he made to you, so he will carry out every threat.

Jos 23:16 If you do not keep the covenant which the LORD your God commanded you to keep and if you serve and worship other gods, then in his anger he will punish you, and soon none of you will be left in this good land that he has given you."

Joshua 23:1-16

Joshua 23 - Joshua's Farewell Address

A. The first exhortation: total obedience to the Word of God.

1. (1-3) Joshua declares what the LORD has done.

Now it came to pass, a long time after the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age. And Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers, and said to them: "I am old, advanced in age. You have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the LORD your God *is* He who has fought for you."

a. **Joshua called for all Israel:** Joshua, in his old age, gathers the leadership of Israel together to give them a farewell address, to communicate to them the things that are, to his heart, the most important for them to hear.

i. Joshua *can't*, as a practical matter, speak to the whole nation, so he speaks to the leaders: **elders**,

heads, judges, and officers. He can reach the entire nation by communicating well to the leaders.

b. You have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the LORD your God is He who has fought for you:

Joshua begins his address by giving glory to God. It would have been easy for Joshua to focus on what *he* had done as a military leader, especially because it was impressive. But he is far more interested in glorifying God than talking about himself.

2. (4-5) Joshua describes the challenges that remain.

See, I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from the Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, as far as the Great Sea westward. And the LORD your God will expel them from before you and drive them out of your sight. So you shall possess their land, as the LORD your God promised you.

a. I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain: Under Joshua's leadership, the army of Israel broke the back of the Canaanite military occupation. Now it remains for each individual tribe to fully possess what God has given them.

b. So you shall possess their land, as the LORD your God promised you: In the same way, God gives every believer an inheritance. We have been *blessed... with every spiritual blessing... in Christ (Eph 1:3)*, and God has a definite part for us to play in coming to possess that inheritance.

3. (6) How Israel will succeed: by total obedience to the word of God.

Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest

you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left,

a. **Therefore be very courageous:** They need to be **courageous**, so they can be obedient. Following God and His word isn't something for the faint of heart.

b. **To keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses:** They must do **all that is written in the Book**. We tend to focus on the aspects of obedience that we like and skip over the parts that attract us less.

c. **Lest you turn aside from it:** They must not **turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left**, because Satan doesn't care which extreme he gets us off to. Either legalism or licentiousness please him.

B. The second exhortation: don't make peace with the enemy.

1. (7-8) Hold fast to the LORD.

And lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause *anyone* to swear *by them*; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them, but you shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.

a. **You shall not make mention of the name of their gods:** Joshua tells Israel to not even make mention of these false gods of the Canaanites. Instead of learning about them, they should **hold fast to the LORD** their God.

b. **You shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day:** An old saying concerning criminal enterprises says something to the effect of, "Keep your friends close, but your enemies even closer" but this is exactly what Christians *are not* to do. The normal Christian, by and large, is not called to become

an expert in the cults or in heresy, but to become an expert in Jesus Christ - to hold fast to Him.

2. (9-13) *Their abiding had been blessed, so if they fail to abide in the LORD, they will also depart from God's blessing.*

For the LORD has driven out from before you great and strong nations; but as for you, no one has been able to stand against you to this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you, as He promised you. Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the LORD your God. Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations; these that remain among you; and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you, know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

a. **For the LORD has driven out from before you great and strong nations:** As Israel abided in the LORD, they saw God do great things through them. As they continued to abide, they would continue to see great things as God fights on their behalf.

b. **Love the LORD your God:** This is what they must be careful to do. They must, as Jude puts it, *keep yourselves in the love of God* (Jud 1:21).

i. Continually loving the LORD takes diligence. There are many things both within us and outside of us to draw us away from that love.

ii. This call to love God is an appeal to the *will*. We first *decide* to love God, even if the feelings don't come first.

c. **If indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations:** Continuing in God's love will mean that they keep themselves separate from the ungodly influences around them; they must keep themselves *unspotted from the world* (Jas 1:27).

d. **They shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish:** If they do not separate themselves from the ungodly influences around them, those influences will become to them instruments of torture, leading to their destruction.

i. What today is only an "innocent Canaanite" in our lives may become a torture and a snare tomorrow.

ii. "How often we see that the temptation we have pampered and encouraged and indulged in has become a scourge and a thorn in our side. The compromising Christian is not a happy man. Let the enemy remain in a Christian life, let him have one foothold, and he soon becomes a scourge." (Redpath)

iii. These ungodly influences never advertise themselves as instruments of torture; they present themselves as wonderful things - but we must see past all this.

C. The warning: God's faithfulness works both ways.

1. (14) *Joshua asks each man to prove God's faithfulness in his own heart.*

Behold, this day I *am* going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed.

a. **You know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed:** Joshua requires that every man probe deep within, and see if there is ever a time in his life when he could rightly accuse God of unfaithfulness to us.

b. **All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed:** If we *think* there could be such a legitimate accusation, it shows we know little of the God we claim to know.

2. (15-16) *As surely as God has been faithful to bless their obedience under Joshua, He will be faithful to curse their later disobedience.*

Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all the good things have come upon you which the LORD your God promised you, so the LORD will bring upon you all harmful things, until He has destroyed you from this good land which the LORD your God has given you. When you have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you.

a. **As all the good things have come upon you which the LORD your God promised you, so the LORD will bring upon you all harmful things:** Joshua merely repeats the principle of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience that was a specific part of Israel's covenant with God (Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28). He emphasizes that God will be just as faithful to judge as He had been to bless.

b. **So the LORD will bring upon you all harmful things:** We relate to God under a different covenant, a new and better covenant (Heb 8:6-7), by which Jesus

has *redeemed us from the curse of the law* (Gal 3:10-14).

i. Therefore, in Jesus we no longer can experience God's "faithfulness to curse us" as Israel knew it. Yet we do experience God's faithfulness to correct us as a loving Father (Heb 12:7), and we do experience a lack of appropriated blessing if we do not abide in Jesus.

The Covenant Renewal at Shechem

Jos 24:1 Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel together at Shechem. He called the elders, the leaders, the judges, and the officers of Israel, and they came into the presence of God.

Jos 24:2 Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, has to say: 'Long ago your ancestors lived on the other side of the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods. One of those ancestors was Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor.

Jos 24:3 Then I took Abraham, your ancestor, from the land across the Euphrates and led him through the whole land of Canaan. I gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac,

Jos 24:4 and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I gave Esau the hill country of Edom as his possession, but your ancestor Jacob and his children went down to Egypt.

Jos 24:5 Later I sent Moses and Aaron, and I brought great trouble on Egypt. But I led you out;

Jos 24:6 I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and cavalry. But when your ancestors got to the Red Sea

Jos 24:7 they cried out to me for help, and I put darkness between them and the Egyptians. I made the sea come

rolling over the Egyptians and drown them. You know what I did to Egypt. " 'You lived in the desert a long time.

Jos 24:8 Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the east side of the Jordan. They fought you, but I gave you victory over them. You took their land, and I destroyed them as you advanced.

Jos 24:9 Then the king of Moab, Balak son of Zippor, fought against you. He sent word to Balaam son of Beor and asked him to put a curse on you.

Jos 24:10 But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you, and in this way I rescued you from Balak.

Jos 24:11 You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The men of Jericho fought you, as did the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I gave you victory over them all.

Jos 24:12 As you advanced, I threw them into panic in order to drive out the two Amorite kings. Your swords and bows had nothing to do with it.

Jos 24:13 I gave you a land that you had never worked and cities that you had not built. Now you are living there and eating grapes from vines that you did not plant, and olives from trees that you did not plant.'

Choose Whom You Will Serve

Jos 24:14 "Now then," Joshua continued, "honor the LORD and serve him sincerely and faithfully. Get rid of the gods which your ancestors used to worship in Mesopotamia and in Egypt, and serve only the LORD.

Jos 24:15 If you are not willing to serve him, decide today whom you will serve, the gods your ancestors worshiped in Mesopotamia or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are now living. As for my family and me, we will serve the LORD."

Jos 24:16 The people replied, "We would never leave the LORD to serve other gods!"

Jos 24:17 The LORD our God brought our fathers and us out of slavery in Egypt, and we saw the miracles that he performed. He kept us safe wherever we went among all the nations through which we passed.

Jos 24:18 As we advanced into this land, the LORD drove out all the Amorites who lived here. So we also will serve the LORD; he is our God."

Jos 24:19 Joshua said to the people, "But you may not be able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God and will not forgive your sins. He will tolerate no rivals,

Jos 24:20 and if you leave him to serve foreign gods, he will turn against you and punish you. He will destroy you, even though he was good to you before."

Jos 24:21 The people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the LORD."

Jos 24:22 Joshua told them, "You are your own witnesses to the fact that you have chosen to serve the LORD." "Yes," they said, "we are witnesses."

Jos 24:23 "Then get rid of those foreign gods that you have," he demanded, "and pledge your loyalty to the LORD, the God of Israel."

Jos 24:24 The people then said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God. We will obey his commands."

Jos 24:25 So Joshua made a covenant for the people that day, and there at Shechem he gave them laws and rules to follow.

Jos 24:26 Joshua wrote these commands in the book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up under the oak tree in the LORD's sanctuary.

Jos 24:27 He said to all the people, "This stone will be our witness. It has heard all the words that the LORD has

spoken to us. So it will be a witness against you, to keep you from rebelling against your God."

Jos 24:28 Then Joshua sent the people away, and everyone returned to their own part of the land.

Joshua's Death and Burial

Jos 24:29 After that, the LORD's servant Joshua son of Nun died at the age of a hundred and ten.

Jos 24:30 They buried him on his own land at Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim north of Mount Gaash.

Jos 24:31 As long as Joshua lived, the people of Israel served the LORD, and after his death they continued to do so as long as those leaders were alive who had seen for themselves everything that the LORD had done for Israel.

Jos 24:32 The body of Joseph, which the people of Israel had brought from Egypt, was buried at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for a hundred pieces of silver. This land was inherited by Joseph's descendants.

Jos 24:33 Eleazar son of Aaron died and was buried at Gibeah, the town in the hill country of Ephraim which had been given to his son Phinehas.

Joshua 24:1-33

Joshua 24 - The Covenant Renewed

A. Joshua remembers God's great works on Israel's behalf.

1. (1) Joshua speaks to the nation again, through its leaders.

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.

a. **Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem:** This was a dramatic last gathering of Israel before the passing of Joshua. It may or may not be part of the same farewell described in Joshua 23. No specific place of gathering is mentioned in Joshua 23, so it could have been part of this same meeting at Shechem.

i. **Shechem** is modern Tel Balata. "This ancient city was situated on the floor of a valley near its entrance, Mount Gerazim and Mount Ebal forming the respective walls. The contour of the land resulted in a natural amphitheater, the acoustics of which were so good that the human voice carried to exceptional distances." (Pink)

b. **To Shechem:** Shechem was a place of rich history for Israel. There were at least four notable events there in lives of the patriarchs. In the first two instances we see *Shechem was a place of calling and commitment*. In the second two we see *Shechem was a place of shame*.

i. Abraham came into the Promised Land and first camped at Shechem. There God appeared to Abraham and confirmed His promise; Abraham built an altar to the Lord there (Gen 12:6-7).

ii. When Jacob came back into the Promised Land, he first camped at Shechem. He purchased land at Shechem and built an altar there, calling the place, *E/ Elohe Israel* (God, the God of Israel, Gen 33:16-20).

iii. Jacob's sons Simeon and Levi deceptively lured the men of Shechem into a massacre, murdering all the men of the city (Genesis 34).

iv. In a season of recommitment to God in Jacob's life, God told him to go to Bethel. Jacob did so and commanded all in his household to put away their

idols. Jacob took those idols and buried them at the terebinth tree near Shechem (Gen 35:1-5).

c. Called for the elders of Israel... their heads... their judges... their officers; and they presented themselves before God: This was an impressive gathering. The leaders of the nation met together at this significant place, meeting in the conscious presence of **God**.

i. There are some who believe that **they presented themselves before God** means that they did this before the tabernacle, which seems at this time to have been at Shiloh (Jos 18:1). Either they **presented themselves before God** without the tabernacle, or it was moved to Shechem for this occasion.

ii. The people also presented themselves to God for the making of the covenant in Exo 19:17.

2. (2-4) God's faithfulness to the patriarchs.

And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, *including* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt.'"

a. **Thus says the Lord GOD of Israel:** We don't often think of Joshua as a prophet, but here he spoke as an inspired messenger of God. Prophecy is not necessarily a prediction of the future. It can simply be a uniquely direct and spontaneous word from God.

b. Your fathers... dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods:

Through Joshua, the Lord reminded Israel that their forefathers came from the other side of the Euphrates (**the River**) and worshipped pagan gods there.

i. There are ancient legends (*only* legends) that say Abraham served the LORD God among the idol worshippers that he was raised among. One legend says that Abraham's father Terah was an idol maker and seller with his own shop. One day Terah had some business to do, so he left Abram in charge of the idol shop. While his father was gone, Abram took the biggest idol and set him in the middle of the shop floor. Then he put all the other idols in a circle around the biggest idol. Then Abram took a hammer, smashed all the smaller idols and put the hammer in front of the one big idol that was still standing. When his father came home, Terah was angry and asked Abram why he smashed all his idols. Abram explained that it wasn't he who did it; it was the one large idol with the hammer in front of it. Terah became even more angry and said, "Abram you know that that idol is nothing but a statue and can't do anything like that." Abram answered, "Yes father, that is true. If they cannot do anything, why do we make and sell them for people to worship as gods?"

ii. It's worth noting the truth – that Abraham, the father of the Jewish people and the first Jew, *was not born a Jew*. He grew up in a pagan, idolatrous home.

iii. "We know that Ur and Haran were centers of moon worship. Joshua was telling the people, 'Your past heritage is a people that were not God's people.'" (Schaeffer)

iv. *Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: "Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite."* (Eze 16:3)

c. **Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River:** Before God challenged Israel, He reminded them of His faithfulness. His goodness was shown at the very beginning of His dealings with Abraham and Abraham's descendants.

3. *(5-7a) God's faithfulness in the escape from Egypt.*

"Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward I brought you out. Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. So they cried out to the LORD; and He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, brought the sea upon them, and covered them. And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt."

a. **Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt:** God did not leave Israel in slavery in Egypt forever. When the time was right, He **sent** a deliverer to His people.

b. **Your eyes saw what I did in Egypt:** There were still many among the leaders and elders of Israel who were children when Israel came out of Egypt, and who saw God destroy the Egyptian army at the Red Sea.

4. *(7b-10) God's faithfulness in the wilderness.*

"Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time. And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan, and they fought with you. But I gave them into your hand, that you might possess their land, and I destroyed them from before

you. Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose to make war against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. But I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he continued to bless you. So I delivered you out of his hand.”

a. Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time: Through Joshua, the LORD summarized most of the Exodus journey with this one sentence.

i. Notably missing from this review of Israel’s history is any mention of Israel’s sin, rebellion, and failure. Though God recorded those things at their time (in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), when He reviewed their history through Joshua He made no mention. Later, God said *their sin I will remember no more* (Jer 31:34). Here, it was as if He had “forgotten” Israel’s past sin.

b. Arose to make war against Israel: Numbers 21-24 makes it clear that the war Balak made against Israel was *spiritual* in nature. He wanted to destroy them either through Balaam’s curse (which did not work) or through the seduction and idolatry of the Moabite women (which worked somewhat). Though it wasn’t a **war** fought with swords and spears, it was a **war** nonetheless.

5. (11-13) God’s faithfulness in the Land of Canaan.

“Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you; *also* the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered them into your hand. I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, *also* the two kings of the Amorites, *but* not with your sword or with your bow. I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not

build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.”

a. **You went over the Jordan and came to Jericho... But I delivered them into your hand:** Speaking through Joshua, God linked the *ancient* history of Israel (all the way back to Abraham) to their *current* history. This is what God had done among them in their own lifetime.

b. **Not with your sword or bow. I have given you a land for which you did not labor... vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant:** There is a sense in which every blessing is undeserved, but some are more obviously so. When Israel enjoyed vineyards and olive orchards in Canaan, it should have made them *especially* grateful for undeserved blessings.

i. They should also have remembered that those who planted the vineyards and orchards were removed by God’s righteous judgment, and if they disobeyed and rejected God, they might also be so judged.

B. Choosing to covenant with the LORD.

1. (14) The challenge: serve God exclusively.

Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!

a. **Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth:** This was not a blind leap of faith. They saw God’s works and experienced His blessings, so it made *sense* for them to exclusively serve a God who had done so much for them.

i. “Joshua gave a promise for the future which was rooted in a space-time past. He did not ask the people to make a Kierkegaardian leap of faith. This stress on

God's action in history recurs throughout his farewell."
(Schaeffer)

b. **Serve the LORD:** In the review of Israel's history, we might say that God contrasted His great work with three sets of gods, associated with three waters.

- Jos 24:2-4 shows that on the other side of the Euphrates were the gods of Sumerian and Babylonian culture – *gods of heritage*.
- Jos 24:5-7 a shows that on the other side of the Red Sea were the gods of ancient Egypt – *gods of upbringing*.
- Jos 24:7 b-13 and 24:15 shows that as they crossed the Jordan there were the gods of the Amorites – *gods of your culture*

i. Joshua applied the principle. The Lord God of Israel is greater than all these idols; therefore, **serve the LORD!**

c. **Serve Him in sincerity and truth:** Joshua boldly called for a *deep* commitment and a *true* commitment.

i. "The best test of sincerity is not always the open hostility of foes, for this often braces up the energies of combat, while at the same time it makes the path of duty clear. Still less is it at the hour of triumph over our foes, then there is no temptation to rebel. The real test of our faithfulness to God is in most cases is our power to continue steadfastly in one course of conduct when the excitement of conflict is removed, and the enemies with which we have to contend are the insidious allurements of ease or custom amid the common place duties of life." (Redpath)

2. (15) *Choose God or choose your alternative.*

And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether

the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

a. **If it seems evil to you to serve the LORD:** Joshua just gave a strong exhortation to *serve the LORD!* (Jos 24:14) Perhaps some among them *did not want to* serve the LORD. What of them?

b. **Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve:** If they chose *not* to serve the LORD, they were then responsible to choose which God they **will serve**. They might choose to serve the gods of their heritage (**the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River**) or they might choose to serve the gods of Canaan (**the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell**). Yet they had to make a choice. Everyone serves some kind of god (or, God).

i. Our choice for God is made in clear mind of the *alternatives*. Some feel a life lived for God is a bad choice; but to what do they compare it? The other choices are *far worse*. As Peter said, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*" (Joh 6:68)

c. **But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD:** Joshua offered an alternative for those who did not want to **serve the LORD** as he encouraged in Jos 24:14. Yet his course was clear and sensible – *he chose to serve the LORD*.

i. "The English uses a future tense here, but the Hebrew tense has a fuller meaning. It expresses continuous action. It involves the future, but it can also point to the past. Joshua was undoubtedly affirming, 'I have chosen, and I will choose.'" (Schaeffer)

ii. Joshua could make this statement because he had lived a life that continuously chose to **serve the LORD**.

- Joshua *chose* to fight against the Amalekites – choosing when it might cost everything.
- Joshua *chose* to reject the golden calf – choosing when the flesh might be satisfied.
- Joshua *chose* to serve the Lord by serving Moses – choosing a humble place.
- Joshua *chose* to believe God's promise about the Promised Land – choosing against the majority.
- Joshua *chose* to recognize the leadership of the Captain of the LORD's army – choosing surrender to God.
- Joshua *chose* to take leadership of Israel and lead them into the land – choosing faith instead of unbelief.

iii. *God gives us choice*. God is a choosing God; we are made in His image. He wants us to also choose.

d. **But as for me and my house**: This shows that Joshua also understood that he, as the priest of his family, was charged with the responsibility to see that his whole **house** served **the LORD**. He had the job of representing his whole house before God.

i. The sense is that Joshua would do whatever was right and godly to make sure that his household did **serve the LORD**. They would serve Him together; it was **we will serve the LORD**.

e. **But as for me and my house**: The contrasting word "**but**" gives the sense that Joshua was determined on this course no matter what anyone else thought. His relationship with God was not based on any man, but on

the LORD alone, and he would serve God no matter what anyone else did.

- Joshua's decision meant *hesitation was gone*.
- Joshua's decision meant *he lived above the evil influence of others*.
- Joshua's decision was *deep, calm, clear, fixed, well-grounded, and solemnly made*.
- Joshua's decision was *openly made*.
- Joshua's decision was *earnestly carried out*.
- Joshua's decision was *kept through his whole life*.

f. **We will serve the LORD:** Inherent in Joshua's declaration is that he would **serve the LORD***only*; he would not **serve the LORD***and* someone or something else. There was one God in his life, and that God was the LORD.

3. (16-18) *Israel responds: they also will serve the LORD.*

So the people answered and said: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for the LORD our God *is* He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed. And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He *is* our God."

a. **For the LORD our God *is* He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt:** Significantly, their declaration is based on God's past dealings with them. How could they *not* serve such a great God?

b. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God:

This is essentially the same attitude reflected by Jesus' disciples in Joh 6:66-69 : *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.* If serving God sometimes seems hard, think of the alternatives.

4. (19-21) *Joshua cautions against a lightly made commitment.*

But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good." And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD!"

a. You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God:

Joshua is not trying to discourage their faith but trying to discourage a light commitment to following the LORD. They need to be reminded that they are serving God under a covenant that *promised* they would be cursed for disobedience.

i. Jesus expressed the same kind of warning, explaining that following Him took total commitment (Luk 14:25-33). It wasn't that Jesus didn't want followers, but He did not want lightly made and easily broken commitments.

ii. "So it becomes us to speak very reverently and leniently of our ability to obey. We are probably overestimating our powers." (Meyer)

b. No, but we will serve the LORD: This was the response Joshua wanted: a commitment but made with full understanding of the consequences.

5. (22-28) *A covenant renewed.*

So Joshua said to the people, "You *are* witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him." And they said, "We *are* witnesses!" "Now therefore," *he said*, "put away the foreign gods which *are* among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel." And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!" So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that *was* by the sanctuary of the LORD. And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God." So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance.

a. **You are witnesses... this stone shall be a witness:** Joshua required that the covenant be confirmed by the testimony of two witnesses, the people and the stone. Therefore, this was a binding covenant before God (Deu 19:15).

i. As Hess notes, there are some points of similarity between this covenant and the normal practice of making covenants in the ancient world between a king or ruler and his people, especially among the Hittites.

b. **Now therefore... put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel:** They *said* they were willing enter into and obey God's covenant. Joshua immediately called them into action on their words.

"As you have promised to reform, begin instantly the work of reformation. A man's promise to serve God soon loses its moral hold of his conscience if he do not instantaneously begin to put it in practice. The grace that enables him to promise is that by the strength of which he is to begin the performance." (Clarke)

c. **So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day:** "Literally, *Joshua cut the covenant*, alluding to the *sacrifice* offered on the occasion." (Clarke)

C. The death of Joshua and Eleazar.

1. (29-31) *A beautiful epitaph for Joshua.*

Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which *is* in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

a. **Being one hundred and ten years old:** Joshua died at a ripe old age and was buried in the land of his own inheritance. There seemed to have been no great funeral or mourning for him, as was surely his wish – to simply be known as

the servant of the LORD.

b. **Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua:** This was the greatest legacy of Joshua. His godly influence was effectively communicated to and through the whole nation.

2. (32) *The burial of Joseph's bones.*

The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.

a. **The bones of Joseph:** This may seem like an inconsequential point, but it fulfills Gen 50:25. God likes to tie up loose ends. This is also mentioned in Heb 11:22 as an example of Joseph's faith.

3. (33) *The death and burial of Eleazar.*

And Eleazar the son of Aaron died. They buried him in a hill *belonging to* Phinehas his son, which was given to him in the mountains of Ephraim.

a. **And Eleazar the son of Aaron died:** Eleazar's death meant that another link with the wilderness generation had passed. Now Phinehas was High Priest.

b. **They buried him:** As the generations pass, they are each challenged to conquer the land of blessing and promise that God has for them - and we will do it, as they pay close heed to our Joshua, to Jesus Christ.